

election. The complaint against Highway 31 political action committee was filed with the Federal Election Commission by the Washington D.C.-based Campaign Legal Center. The complaint alleges the PAC used lines of credit from vendors to avoid disclosing that it was backed by well-funded national Democratic groups." [Full story.](#)

— New anti-Blackburn PAC in Tennessee: A new super PAC called the Smoky Mountain Values PAC filed with the Federal Election Commission this week. The PAC is solely devoted to keeping Marsha Blackburn, frontrunner for the Republican Senate nomination, from being elected, said Kyle Tharp, one of the PAC's operators. The group plans to raise money online and is being run by "a group of five young, 25-35 year old current and former Tennesseans" working on a volunteer basis, Tharp said in an email, adding that most of the operators have worked in Democratic politics. Tharp declined to detail the PAC's spending plans but said that "it won't be insignificant." [Website here.](#)

ON THE AIR — "Schwartz is first in governor's race to air commercials; declares he 'will fix' education, says Laxalt has 'no solutions,'" by the Nevada Independent's Michelle Rindels: "Republican gubernatorial candidate and Treasurer Dan Schwartz has launched a pair of TV ads, becoming the first governor hopeful to go up with commercials. Schwartz, the perceived underdog in the race, announced the two, 15-second ads on Tuesday. One starts with police sirens and the words 'Code Red Emergency,' noting that in spite of a tax increase, Nevada still ranks last in education. ... A second, 15-second commercial opens up with a line from a Reno Gazette-Journal opinion piece calling Laxalt an 'empty suit.' It features shots of a grinning Laxalt and scrolls through a list of donations the attorney general has taken." [Full story.](#) [Watch the ads here and here.](#)

STAFFING UP — Tester hires press secretary: Montana Sen. Jon Tester's reelection campaign has hired Luke Jackson as press secretary. Jackson previously worked in Tester's Senate office as the senator's executive assistant and then his Montana press secretary.

AROUND THE MAP — Quick takes from across the country:

NATIONAL:

Democratic groups: Indivisible announced that it would start wading into intra-party primaries in a [Mother Jones](#) piece.

SENATE

Indiana: "Todd Rokita adds to his cheap shot resume," Indianapolis Star columnist Matthew Tully writes.

Missouri: Japheth Campbell is running as a Libertarian, [the Springfield News-Leader](#) reports.

Montana: Libertarian Rick Breckenridge entered the U.S. Senate race, [the Great Falls Tribune](#) reports.

Wisconsin: A super PAC raised over \$2 million for former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke's Senate run, even though Clarke's allies called the PAC a scam, [OpenSecrets](#) reports.

HOUSE

CA-21: Days after Emilio Huerta dropped out, Fresno businessman TJ Cox announced his challenge to GOP Rep. David Valadao. "Cox, a Democrat who had moved to Modesto to challenge Turlock Republican Jeff Denham in the 10th District, will move back to Fresno to campaign against Valadao in the 21st District," [The Fresno Bee](#) reported.

CA-49: Christina PreJean, a Democrat and Air Force vet, dropped out of the race, via [KPBS](#).

CO-06: The Sierra Club endorsed Democrat Jason Crow, per a statement from his campaign.

FL-27: Former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, who was also president of the Clinton Foundation, filed to run as a Democrat, [USA Today](#) reported.

IA-01: "The Heat & Frost Insulators & Allied Workers Local 81, United Association of journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Boilermakers Local 83 joined 10 other unions in endorsing [Abby] Finkenauer," [The Gazette](#) reported.

IA-02: "Ginny Caligiuri announces bid for Congress in Iowa's 2nd District," the Des Moines Register reports.

IL-13: United Steel Workers endorsed Democrat Betsy Dirksen Londigan, per a statement from her campaign.

MD-06: Maryland Rep. Anthony Brown endorsed Democrat David Trone, per a statement from his campaign.

NH-01: Former state Republican Vice Chair Matt Mayberry said he won't run, via [WMUR](#).

ND-AL: Former state Senate Minority Leader Mac Schneider is running as a Democrat, via [KVRR](#).

PA-16: "Ron DiNicola has established an exploratory committee to consider a run for Congress in the newly created" district, [YourErie.com](#) reported.

GOVERNOR

Alabama: Pundits call the gubernatorial race "boring and vanilla" in an article from [AL.com](#).

California: "GOP candidate for California governor John Cox once linked gay rights to polygamy, bestiality," the [Los Angeles Times](#) reports.

Florida: Democratic former Rep. Gwen Graham raised \$660,000 in February, including a \$250,000 check from her father, [Florida Politics](#) reports.

Illinois: "Kennedy wants Illinois to pull pension investments from gun companies," the [Chicago Tribune](#) reports.

Kansas: State Sen. John Doll left the Republican Party and will serve as independent Greg Orman's running mate on the fall ballot, Orman's campaign announced Wednesday.

Ohio: Sen. Mike Lee endorsed Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, per a press release from Taylor's campaign.

More Ohio: The AFL-CIO endorsed Richard Cordray in the Democratic primary, the [Toledo Blade](#) reports.

Oregon: "Oregon Rep. Knute Buehler, the Republican who hopes to challenge Gov. Kate Brown in the fall election, called on Tuesday for the governor to veto a Democratic tax plan," the [Oregonian](#) reported.

Rhode Island: Gov. Gina Raimondo has the support of 38 percent of voters to Republican Allan Fung's 36 percent in a new WPRI/Roger Williams University poll, [WPRI](#) reports.

Wisconsin: "Kelda Roys breastfeeds her daughter in new campaign video," the [Wisconsin State Journal](#) reports.

CODA — QUOTE OF THE DAY: "She did a good job until she realized she wasn't wearing her glasses." — Rep. Beto O'Rourke on his mother's work driving the campaign van in a [Wall Street Journal](#) story on parents helping their children's political bids.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/campaign-pros-morning-score/2018/03/what-happened-in-the-heart-of-texas-124608>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Top takeaways from the Texas primary [Back](#)

By Gabriel Debenedetti and Elena Schneider | 03/07/2018 05:50 AM EDT

The 2018 midterms kicked off in eye-opening fashion in Texas Tuesday, as a series of surprises in Democratic House primaries jolted the landscape while the party's large turnout sent a warning to Republicans nationwide.

But the GOP remained in the driver's seat in statewide races throughout Texas by night's end, leaving most of the shocks to down-ballot races.

Washington Democrats saw some of their runoff plans go down the drain. Well-funded candidates fell in contest after contest. George P. Bush unexpectedly cruised to victory. And women kept on winning.

With lawmakers across the country closely eyeing Tuesday's contests for hints of what's to come this year, those results and others provided a series of vivid lessons.

Here are POLITICO's six takeaways from the first primaries of 2018:

Democratic enthusiasm is real, but may not be enough in Texas

It's a familiar pattern by now: every few years, Democrats insist they're going to be competitive statewide in Texas because of their party's energy and demographic change sweeping the state. And every few years, they fall short. This year, though, the state's Democrats were certain the landscape would look different after more Democrats — 465,000 — than Republicans — 420,000 — voted in Texas' 15 largest counties in early voting.

It appeared to be a clear continuation of the boundless Democratic energy popping up all across the country in opposition to Donald Trump, but by the time Election Day numbers came in, the enthusiasm dimmed — slightly. Data from the state's other 239 counties favored Republicans, and by the end of the night, there were roughly a half-million more votes in the GOP primary than in the Democratic primary.

It was a clear improvement over the 2010 and 2014 midterm cycles, when Republicans made up roughly 70 percent of primary voters. And more Democrats voted in the senatorial and gubernatorial primaries than in any comparable race since 2002. But it likely suggested that much of the Democratic Party's early vote came from existing primary voters who were excited to participate this year, rather than any enormous tranche of newly activated voters.

That means competing statewide — including against Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) — remains an uphill challenge for Democrats. And Rep. [Beto O'Rourke](#), the Democratic standard-bearer in that race, still must consolidate his party after two relatively unknown rivals picked up over 38 percent of the primary vote.

Still, their voters' newfound exuberance may be enough to swing individual down-ballot races both in Texas and around the country.

D.C. Dems get brushed back

Laura Moser isn't going anywhere — and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's first attempt at thinning a primary field failed.

The DCCC dumped opposition research against Moser, a journalist and activist, viewing her as a candidate with too much baggage to win in November. Instead, Moser will face off against Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, an attorney, in May for a shot at a suburban district that Democrats believe is key to flipping the House.

Moser, who raised more than \$130,000 after the DCCC's attacks late last month, is now laying the groundwork for an outsider, Bernie Sanders-style campaign. In a TV ad, Moser urges voters to reject "Washington party bosses [telling] us who to choose," adding, "we tried that before, and look where it got us."

"The DCCC's attack backfired, showing them to be a little toothless," said a Democratic strategist, granted anonymity to talk candidly about party strategy. "And once the DCCC inserted itself, it became inevitable that the same ghosts of Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Bernie Sanders and 2016 will pop up."

The DCCC, in a memo released early Wednesday morning, said that voters "[picked] a clear frontrunner" and remain "in a strong position to win in November," DCCC spokesman Cole Leiter said in a statement.

Fletcher, who's backed by EMILY's List, has drawn opposition from unions. Working Families Party spent \$20,000 on negative ads against her in the primary, accusing her law firm of "[attacking] the right of immigrant women to stand up for themselves in the workplace," according to one digital ad.

Trump's popularity even helps a Bush — in Texas, no less

By avoiding a run-off in his reelection bid as Land Commissioner on Tuesday night, George P. Bush — son of Jeb, nephew of George W., grandson of George H.W. — showed Republicans that sometimes it pays to lean all the way into your ties to the president, no matter how close to the party establishment you may seem.

At least in conservative states like Texas.

A member of perhaps the state's most prominent modern political family, the 41-year-old Bush nonetheless relied heavily on his support from both Trump and Donald Trump Jr. to clear 50 percent in a race against a field that included former Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

Patterson had loudly criticized Bush for his first term in the job, including his work on preserving the Alamo, but a final-stretch ad blitz from Bush underscored the incumbent's conservatism as he hit Patterson for not backing Trump in 2016.

At a time Republicans around the country are trying to figure out how to position themselves with respect to Trump, Bush demonstrated that in a consistently Republican playing field like Texas, the combination of universal name identification and appeals to the Trump-loving base can be enough to overcome even harsh intra-party attacks.

Cash isn't necessarily king

Three Democrats — who led fundraising throughout much of 2017 — failed even to reach the runoffs in top-tier congressional races, despite their early money advantage. Now Democrats are left watching candidates who have demonstrated less fundraising prowess battle it out over the next two months for the nomination before being able to reload against GOP incumbents with a head start in the general election.

Ed Meier, a former State Department administration official, led his Democratic opponents in fundraising throughout 2017 and headed into the primary for a competitive, Dallas-area seat with the most cash on hand. But Meier, who aired TV ads in the expensive Dallas media market, finished in fourth place. Colin Allred, a former NFL football player, didn't air any TV ads and struggled to raise money, but was the top vote-getter.

"You have to do more than be the biggest fundraiser, because Democrats want to be inspired," said Isaac Baker, a Democratic media consultant who worked on Allred's campaign.

In the Houston-area battleground district, Alex Triantaphyllis raised more than \$1 million — topping all of his primary opponents in total raised during the race. But Triantaphyllis, a nonprofit executive, still finished behind three of them.

Jay Hulings, a former federal prosecutor who was running in Texas 23rd District, a traditional swing district, picked up early national support from Minority Whip Steny Hoyer and Blue Dog PAC. He posted strong fundraising numbers throughout last year, but he failed to make the top-two runoff.

The suburbs rule

Lawmakers and leading operatives on both sides of the aisle have grown increasingly convinced that suburban districts will be 2018's central battleground in the war for control of the House. And the matchups created by Tuesday's primary in two highly targeted races likely cement that expectation. Much of the party's turnout gains were focused in metro and suburban zones like these.

Outside of Dallas, Allred posted an unexpectedly large margin of victory in a crowded primary to set himself up as a clear favorite in May's runoff before taking on Republican Rep. Pete Sessions, in a district that went for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

And in suburban Houston, in another Clinton district, the vulnerable Rep. John Culberson will also have to wait until May to find out his opponent's identity. The vote totals — the number of votes in the GOP primary exceeded the Democratic primary tally by only 5,000 — reflect serious interest from Democrats in the district Culberson has represented for nine terms.

"This is proof positive of everything we've been taking about with these newly-competitive districts — growing in diversity, highly educated oftentimes," said Charlie Kelly, executive director of House Majority PAC, the main Democratic super PAC for House races. "Places that, I think, are now really competitive. We saw the transition in 2016, and we're seeing more evidence today."

The 'Year of the Woman' starts off strong

Texas is on track to get its first two Latina members of Congress, while also elevating women in some of the most hotly contested primaries in top-tier races throughout the state.

"The Democrats coming out of the Texas primaries tonight are women and people of color in greater numbers than we've seen in the past, and it reflects the diversity of the modern-day Democratic Party," Baker said.

The Democratic nominee facing Rep. Will Hurd for his battleground seat will likely be a woman: Obama administration alum Gina Ortiz Jones finished first in a Democratic primary on Tuesday night, while Judy Canales, another former Obama administration official, was battling a male candidate for second place

Wednesday morning. In Houston, Moser and Fletcher are squaring off, before one of them turns to Culberson. In Dallas, Lillian Salerno will run against Allred.

All of EMILY's List-endorsed candidates in Democratic primaries either won outright or advanced to a runoff. The pro-abortion rights group president, Stephanie Schriock, called it a "historic night" in a statement.

Sylvia Garcia, a state senator, and Veronica Escobar, a former El Paso County judge, both clinched the nomination in their respective primaries — clearing their path to likely becoming the first Hispanic women to represent the state in Congress. Garcia drew a strong challenge from Tahir Javed, a health care executive who self-funded much of his bid, but her name ID in the district outstripped his endorsement from Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Escobar won the primary in Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke's El Paso-based seat, and will be a prohibitive favorite in November in a majority-Hispanic district that backed Hillary Clinton by a 46-point margin.

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National Democrats' strategy comes up short in Texas [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard and Elena Schneider | 03/06/2018 08:16 PM EDT

The first primary of the 2018 midterm elections has already scrambled the political landscape, after a Democratic candidate spurned by the national party qualified for a primary runoff in one of the districts central to Democrats' efforts to win back control of the House next year.

Laura Moser, an activist and journalist, finished second in Tuesday's Democratic primary in a Houston-area congressional district held by Republicans — despite opposition from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which called Moser a "Washington insider" who would lose in the general election.

Moser lived in Washington but moved to the Houston-area district to run. She had written in 2014 that she would "sooner have her teeth pulled" than relocate to Texas, where she grew up.

She will face attorney Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, the leading vote-getter on Tuesday. But because Fletcher did not win a majority of the vote — she led Moser, 30 percent to 24 percent, when The Associated Press called the race — the two will advance to a runoff on May 22.

In the closing weeks of the campaign, the DCCC posted [a memo](#) featuring opposition research about Moser, including her residency, until recently, in Washington. The committee declined to back Fletcher explicitly early Wednesday but did reiterate in a statement its commitment to defeating Culberson, noting that Democrats in the district had picked "a clear front-runner" and "are in a strong position to win in November."

That race was just one of three dozen congressional contests on the ballot Tuesday, as voters in Texas fired the starting pistol of the 2018 midterms. Voters also chose nominees for governor and a U.S. Senate seat.

Two statewide, Republican incumbents with national aspirations, Gov. Greg Abbott and Sen. Ted Cruz, won renomination easily. Cruz will face Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who dispatched two challengers in the Democratic primary, in November.

While strategists in both parties remain skeptical of O'Rourke's chances of toppling Cruz in the large, expensive and traditionally Republican state, O'Rourke has managed to outraise the first-term GOP incumbent in three consecutive reporting periods, boosted largely by small-dollar donations.

Abbott's November opponent is still to be determined. Former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez and Andrew White, the son of former Gov. Mark White, will face off in a runoff on May 22. Valdez led the nine-candidate field, but she finished well short of the majority of the vote needed to win the nomination outright.

Runoffs are also in the offing in two other competitive, Republican-held congressional seats: Rep. Pete Sessions' North Dallas district and the expansive district held by Rep. Will Hurd, which stretches from the San Antonio suburbs west to just outside El Paso.

Colin Allred, an attorney and former pro football player, was the leading Democratic vote-getter for the Sessions seat. He will face former Obama Administration official Lillian Salerno in the runoff.

In the Democratic primary for Hurd's seat, Gina Ortiz Jones, another former Obama administration official and Iraq War veteran, finished in first place. But her runoff opponent was also unclear early Wednesday: Judy Canales, another former Obama administration official; high school teacher Rick Treviño and former federal prosecutor Jay Hulings were all running close.

In addition to the three seats seen as competitive in the general election, eight other congressional districts are open, without an incumbent on the ballot.

Six Republican members are not seeking reelection this year — with each occupying seats seen as unlikely to switch parties in November: Reps. Ted Poe, Sam Johnson, Jeb Hensarling, Joe Barton, Lamar Smith and Blake Farenthold. Barton and Farenthold are leaving Congress amid sex scandals, with the latter accused of sexual harassment and inappropriate behavior toward congressional staff. Republican primaries in each district, with the exception of Johnson's, are headed to runoffs in May.

Two safe Democratic seats are open: Rep. Gene Green is retiring, while O'Rourke is leaving his El Paso-based seat to run statewide. Both are likely to elect the state's first Latina members of Congress this fall: State Sen. Sylvia Garcia won the nomination outright for Green's seat, while former El Paso County judge Veronica Escobar won the primary in O'Rourke's seat.

Kevin Robillard contributed to this report.

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Franken's replacement tries to turn the page [Back](#)

By Reena Flores | 03/07/2018 05:05 AM EDT

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Sen. Tina Smith doesn't want to talk about Al Franken.

When asked about her Democratic predecessor, who resigned the Minnesota seat amid allegations of sexual misconduct, she avoided even saying his name in a recent interview with POLITICO's Women Rule podcast, instead concentrating on the economic implications of the #MeToo movement.

"I believe it's a cultural change that we're going through as a country, and it's not really a partisan issue," Smith, Minnesota's former lieutenant governor, told POLITICO. "But I think that my party, the Democratic Party, needs to continue to lead the way in ... paving the path for more economic opportunity for women. And to me, this is really part of that challenge, whether it is paid family leave, whether it is improved child care."

Franken's checkered history on sexual harassment is an issue Smith hardly wants to focus on, given her intention to run a campaign for office this fall - a feat that can typically take up to two years - even as she acclimates to her new job. Adding to the task: It's also her first solo run for elected office.

It's a daunting enough task that it had Smith questioning whether it could be done.

Eventually, she said, "I became convinced that it was."

Smith believes that her stint as lieutenant governor for three years - as well as her three decades in the state - have primed her for the seat.

"Being lieutenant governor is sort of like being invited into everyone's living room, and you just get an understanding of the state," she said. "That gives me comfort that I can carry forward."

"That's not to say it's not going to be a challenge," she acknowledged.

Smith became senator following reports from several women that Franken forcibly kissed and groped them. After Franken's resignation from Congress last year, Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton appointed Smith to the seat until a special election is held in November. (Minnesota's other senator, Amy Klobuchar, will also be running for a third term this year.)

But of the truncated campaign schedule - Smith has less than 35 weeks to run, and at least one Democrat has already declared intentions to stage a primary challenge - she opted for a positive spin.

"Maybe it'll be a little bit of a blessing," Smith mused on the podcast. "It'll give us permission to be a little bit more innovative and try some new things."

Her game plan is simple, hinging on her brief time in national office: "Demonstrate by the way that I do this job what kind of senator I will be, and then just to go out and have conversations with people about their lives."

Smith's job in the Senate is a doubly tricky one in the age of President Donald Trump. While the Democrat has been vocal in her criticisms of the White House, she has been hesitant to categorically denounce the president, who lost Minnesota in the 2016 election to Hillary Clinton by a slim 1.5 percentage points.

When asked whether she believed Trump was capable of being president, Smith demurred.

"I think that it is up to the voters of this country to decide whether he is fit for office," Smith said. "I strongly disagree with him on almost everything. But I also believe that my state didn't send me to Washington, D.C., or any of us to Washington, D.C., to just throw bombs and fight."

She explained Trump's appeal to her state's voters.

"In many parts of Minnesota outside of the big metro areas, and the college towns, and the regional centers like Duluth or Rochester, the state has a lot of people who work incredibly hard," Smith said. "I think that what happened is that Trump was able to connect with that sense of real concern."

But Smith - whose long career in politics includes stints working on her mentor Walter Mondale's Senate campaign, along with work as a regional vice president for Planned Parenthood - is optimistic about the Democrats' chances in the upper chamber in 2018.

Of the party's prospects for taking back the Senate this year, Smith acknowledged that "it's a tough map. But, she added, "it's an extraordinary time."

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POLITICO Magazine: Inslee wants to take down the 'Republican governors who are kowtowing' [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dovere | 03/06/2018 05:09 AM EDT

Jay Inslee wants governors' races to become the rallying cry for the resistance to President Donald Trump.

"It's a great awakening that we have to fight on a state-by-state basis," the Washington governor and chair of the Democratic Governors Association said in an interview for the latest episode of POLITICO's Off Message podcast.

Democrats are tracking Republican gubernatorial primaries, where in most states, candidates — even in Nevada, Michigan, Florida and Tennessee, where Trump's backing of one candidate is already public — are still elbowing each other to out-Trump each other.

The strategy isn't anything like the distance that many House Republicans are already trying to create from the president.

"If the Democrats want to use my support for the president and vice president against me, I say bring it on," says Tennessee Rep. Diane Black, a Republican who's running for governor, touting her support for the president wherever she goes, and believes her vote for his tax bill is going to be one of her best weapons.

That's exactly the vulnerability Inslee believes Democrats can hit at, even though he continues to advise them to stay away from just talking about Trump himself all the time.

"We have Republican governors who are kowtowing to Donald Trump and will continue to do so, who have been lackeys to his abysmal record and his moral depravity and his inhumane policies, and that all across the country they will be called to account for that chaotic behavior," Inslee said. "It's been amazing to me, shocking and disappointing, that we have so many Republicans who now aspire for governor who just are afraid and shaking in their boots and won't stand up against this man in the White House."

Standing up to Trump is exactly what Inslee did, literally, last week in the White House, seizing a moment during a meeting of the National Governors Association to chastise Trump for his proposal to arm teachers. "We need to do a little less tweeting and a little more listening" to educators, Inslee told Trump, in what was the most direct public confrontation any Democratic leader has had with the president to date.

Trump listened, his arms folded across his chest, and moved on.

Inslee hasn't. He wants his candidates to lean hard into pushing for restrictions on magazine size, banning bump stocks, raising the minimum age for buying assault rifles—and make it into an argument for states doing what Trump and the Republicans in Washington haven't. "It comes down to Democratic governors who are standing up for action and the Republicans who are standing in the courthouse door just taking orders from the NRA," said Inslee.

The difference between gubernatorial races in 2014 and 2018, Inslee argues, is both a wave now running in the other direction—"the potential tsunami zone," he predicts—and the lack of many Republican incumbents in an environment when governors have been reelected in 50 of the 58 races since 2010. This year, 12 of the 26 races Democrats are chasing are open seats, and three—Kansas, South Carolina and Iowa—are against Republican lieutenant governors who moved up after their predecessors received appointments to the Trump administration, and are now running for governor for the first time as incumbents.

Democrats have been down this road before. In 2014, they were convinced that the nine states Obama won in 2008 and 2012 but which elected Republican governors in between in the 2010 wave were theirs for the taking.

In the years since, Wisconsin, Florida, Michigan and Ohio not only re-elected Republican governors in 2014, but went for Trump in 2016. Along the way, Trump picked up Pennsylvania, the sole Democratic gubernatorial flip in 2014.

But, Democrats argue, what also happened since is Ralph Northam winning Virginia in a blow-out last year by talking up progressive issues (including gun control) and projecting an air of calm rejection of the president, while Republican nominee Ed Gillespie never found an answer to the Trump question that worked for both the GOP base and the general electorate.

Just as the Republican wins in 2014 governors' races previewed Trump's strength in key states and helped put in place policies that helped him along—ending right to work in Michigan and Wisconsin, for example, which undercut union strength on election day—Republicans are warning the White House to focus on governors' races this year if only for the sake of protecting Trump's re-election chances in 2020.

They're also dismissive of any Democratic effort to nationalize gubernatorial races, pointing out that their own attempt to do that in Montana and West Virginia, two of the heaviest pro-Trump states, didn't stop the states from electing Democratic governors on the same day in 2016.

Democrats and Republicans in Washington are both anxiously watching the states that put Trump over the edge to see how the dynamics will play out this year.

Bill Schuette, Michigan's Republican attorney general and the frontrunner in that state's gubernatorial primary, dismissed Inslee's strategy on Trump.

"It's wishful thinking, and I think it really comes with the same strain and premise that said it was going to be Armageddon for Republicans in 2016, and that didn't occur," said

Schuette, who likes to brag he's the only candidate the president has tweeted about twice. ("The first time my name was misspelled. But you know what? Half of Michigan's taken decades to learn how to spell my name.")

Democrats who say that Trump is going to weigh down Republicans aren't paying attention to what's happening in Michigan or anywhere else, says Schuette.

Now, Schuette said, he'll talk up the tax bill that House Republicans still can't figure out how to message, and remind Michigan voters that Ram truck production has moved from Mexico to Macomb County under Trump: "it's a shift of the rotation of the earth on its axis."

Maybe try the Trump argument in bluer states—though in two or the bluest, Maryland and Massachusetts, Republican incumbents running for reelection have the highest approval numbers in the country—but not in any state where the president is popular.

"I'm delighted that this administration is going in the direction that they're going," Black said. "I lean into it, and I thank them for who they are."

Inslee boasts not of just what happens when a state elects a Democratic governor, but what happens when a state puts the whole government in Democratic hands, as happened after a state senate special election last year flipped from red to blue, and upending control of the whole chamber.

In the few months since, Inslee has signed new laws on a clean energy plan, voting rights, pay equity and reproductive rights.

Republicans say this represents overreach that will flip statehouse seats back in November. Inslee said he's not worried, and embraces the contrast with Congress.

"It's not so much a debate between plan A or B. It's between plan A and nothing, because that's what the Republicans have offered," Inslee said. "They're not offering us a real solution on infrastructure. They're not offering us a solution on climate change, they just denied its existence. They're not offering a plan on really seriously what to do about gun violence. We are."

The issue that grabs Inslee the most, though, is climate change. He wrote a whole book about it—"Apollo's Fire"—in 2007, made a green jobs economy the centerpiece of his first gubernatorial campaign in 2012, and has prioritized it the last six years.

He thinks there's enough attention to climate change that a candidate could even run in 2020 on it as an almost single-issue campaign.

"There's points where things change, and I think we're getting to that tipping point right now on climate change," Inslee said. "And it has to happen now because we don't have a lot more time."

He wouldn't yet say if that candidate might be him, despite the chatter about his running. His term is, after all, up in 2020, though there are no term limits in Washington.

"My term could be up as long as the people accept me," Inslee said. "I have plans to be governor because I love the job and I feel that I've brought some things to the table for my state."

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Bryant 'will not appoint himself' to Senate seat, spokesman says [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 03/06/2018 06:23 PM EDT

Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant's office issued its most direct statement yet on appointing a successor to outgoing Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), saying the governor would not tap himself for the job.

"Gov. Bryant will finish out his term. He will not appoint himself, believing it improper to do so," Bryant spokesman Clay Chandler said in a statement.

The statement comes a day after Cochran announced that he would resign from office effective April 1, citing "ongoing" health challenges.

Bryant, a second-term Republican, had been urged by the White House and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to consider appointing himself as a successor. But even before Cochran's announcement, the governor indicated that he was cool to the idea.

When asked about that encouragement during the National Governors Association winter meeting last month, Bryant said, "No one's done a better job than Thad Cochran. We want him to stay as long as he possibly can, and I think that's his decision for the future."

Other names often mentioned as potential appointees include Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves, Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann and state Agriculture Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith.

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Trump finds some friends on tariffs: Red-state Democrats [Back](#)

By Elana Schor | 03/06/2018 06:24 PM EDT

Some of the biggest cheerleaders of President Donald Trump's trade crackdown happen to be the very Democratic senators his party is gunning to defeat in November.

As Republicans howl that new tariffs could cause an economic meltdown, a handful of Rust Belt Democrats are giving the president a rare serving of praise. His stance could give the trio — Sens. Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, all top GOP targets — a chance to tout their bipartisan credentials and defend their home-state metals industries all at once.

"I'm happy to see action being taken," Casey said in an interview, acknowledging that his alignment with Trump "doesn't happen that often."

The remarks from Casey, echoed by Brown and Manchin, highlight one of the rare instances since Trump took office that has upended traditional partisan allegiances. Republicans and business groups are pleading with Trump to step back from the ledge and warning that his tariffs plan could wipe out the benefits of the GOP's tax cuts — and then some. The policy "could metastasize into a larger trade war," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday.

Many Democrats agree. But some of the ones siding with the president are among the most politically vulnerable in the chamber.

"I wanted him to be aggressive, and he was aggressive," Brown told reporters this week. Brown said he "maybe would have chosen one of the other" alternatives Trump's Commerce Department proposed to crack down on cheap steel and aluminum imports. "But I have urged him to move on this, and I did it publicly, and I'm glad he has moved on this."

Under other circumstances, the president might have counted on even broader support for his combative trade strategy from Democrats in states where turnout from blue-collar manufacturing workers helped him win the White House.

But the hurried and polarizing rollout of Trump's effort has left other electorally endangered Democrats from manufacturing states holding off or raising questions about the broader economic impact of the planned tariffs, which some of the president's own aides are lobbying him to scrap.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) called for a stronger focus on Chinese dumping of products onto the U.S. market, adding that the Trump administration "need[s] a more thoughtful, targeted approach to what they're doing."

Another Rust Belt Democrat facing a tough reelection race, Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, praised the "Buy American" provisions she has repeatedly called for votes on as an alternative approach to Trump's plans.

"I'm not opposed to tariffs but I think they have to be very targeted," Baldwin said in an interview. "And so I think Canada, for example, should be exempt."

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Tuesday that Mexico and Canada likely would be exempt from the tariffs when Trump formally rolls them out later this week. But the absence of a formal release scrambled the politics of the issue for Democrats and Republicans alike, with leaders in both parties urging the president to take a different tack.

"There is a lot of concern among Republican senators that this could sort of metastasize into a larger trade war, and many of our members are discussing with the administration just how broad, how sweeping this might be," McConnell told reporters on Tuesday. He warned against tariffs "interfering with what appears to be an economy that's taking off in every respect."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who has pushed Trump to make good on campaign-trail promises to rein in what both men have slammed as improper Chinese trade practices, echoed Stabenow on Tuesday in calling for the White House to focus its energies more on Beijing.

"They are our No. 1 trade problem," Schumer told reporters. "Not Canada, not Europe."

Other red-state Democrats on the GOP's November target list had their own warnings for Trump.

"I'm very worried about how it seems that little thought has been put into the potential retaliation to agriculture, which would be brutal in my state," McCaskill said in a brief interview.

Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), who joined most Republicans in voting to advance a contentious free-trade bill in 2015, described the plan as "folly."

"I think it's going to have dramatic and long-term ramifications for economic growth in our country and I hope that the president reconsiders," she told reporters.

Even Sen. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.), whose home state has led the United States in steel production for more than four decades, stopped short of a full-throated endorsement of Trump's plan. Donnelly, who hailed the administration's decision to start the national security inquiry that led to the tariff plan, "looks forward to reviewing President Trump's trade measures" once they are released, according to his office.

But other red-state Democrats said Trump's plan would be a boon for metalworkers in their home states who've been decrying unfair foreign competition for years.

Manchin described the issue as "one of the many" things he and Trump agree on, adding that the tariffs push is "a chance to look at all these agreements we have, what they've done to our country and find out a way to correct it."

Casey noted that "it remains to be seen how broad they go and what the exemptions are, but I want to make sure steelmakers in our state and other states have some relief they haven't had in a long time."

Brown told reporters that "if we allow the Chinese, especially, to continue to undermine trade rules, then they work their way up the supply chain."

"So I think you draw the line, and you enforce the rules, and the laws are clear — and it's what you ought to be doing."

Burgess Everett contributed to this report.

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Senate advances bank deregulation bill as Democrats break ranks [Back](#)

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 03/06/2018 10:56 AM EDT

Sixteen Senate Democrats ignored warnings from progressives and joined with Republicans on Tuesday to advance a wide-ranging deregulation bill that lawmakers are expected to pass in the coming days.

The Senate voted to begin debate on the bill in a 67-32 vote, opening the door to the first major overhaul of banking regulations since Democrats enacted the Dodd-Frank law in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

A deep rift between Democrats over banking industry oversight will be on full display on the Senate floor over the coming days, exposing to voters a clash of progressives and centrists that has been building for several years.

"The people in Congress may have forgotten the crash 10 years ago, but I guarantee that people across this country have not forgotten the pain that these giant banks caused," Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) said as she sought to rally her colleagues against the White House-backed bill. "They do not want to see Congress move toward deregulating these banks."

The core team of moderate Democrats that has been working to pass the legislation for years fought back Tuesday, calling out critics who they said were exaggerating the impact of the legislation.

"I am not going to let this legislative history get papered with misstatements about this bill," Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) said, vowing to "make sure that our bill is accurately discussed."

The bill — one of the few important bipartisan pieces of legislation to move through Congress — would peel back key parts of Dodd-Frank, the 2010 law that was one of former President Barack Obama's signature achievements, while leaving most of its regulations intact.

It has several elements aimed at scaling back lending rules. They include: relaxed mortgage regulations for small banks; broad exemptions from oversight for regional banks with up to \$250 billion in assets; a mandate that the Federal Reserve tailor its rules for big banks; and easier capital and liquidity requirements for a number of the nation's largest lenders.

The bill includes a handful of consumer protections, such as a requirement that credit reporting companies like Equifax provide free credit monitoring to members of the military — a proposal that has alarmed conservatives who warn that it would expose the firms to lawsuits.

Democrats who helped draft the bill argue that the legislation is an overdue recalibration of Dodd-Frank that would help make it easier for small and midsize banks to provide credit, particularly in rural areas.

For those senators driving the legislation, including Heitkamp, Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), it is an opportunity to show that things can still get done in a bitterly divided Congress.

The senators on Tuesday praised Senate Banking Chairman Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) for working with them to make the legislation a reality, despite the fact that many in the GOP want to enact more sweeping rollbacks of financial regulations.

"This is old-school legislating," Heitkamp said.

But for Warren, it was an example of everything that's wrong with Washington.

She accused her colleagues of backing the legislation because of years of sustained bank lobbying in the wake of Dodd-Frank's enactment.

To make her point, Warren said she had more than a dozen amendments ready to go, and she previewed the topics she would focus on in the debate: consumers, big banks and the broader "history of deregulation efforts in Congress."

Warren's amendments — if she has the opportunity to offer them — could prove to be tough votes for Democrats who support the underlying legislation and don't want to throw off the political balance among its co-sponsors.

The Massachusetts progressive will likely fall short of being able to stop the bill, though most Senate Democrats joined with her Tuesday to oppose moving forward with the legislation.

A potential 2020 candidate for president, Warren said she was "enormously frustrated on behalf of the American people."

"The importance of fighting now is to stop this bill," Warren said. "But it's also to make clear we're not just going to lay down for the big financial institutions."

Warner, of Virginia, said the bill's co-sponsors were preparing to unveil additions to the bill via a so-called manager's amendment. The Democrat said it would include new student loan safeguards and other pieces of legislation with bipartisan support in the House and the Senate, though he said the proposals were unlikely to scramble the politics around the package.

"Those who were for it are going to still be for it," he said. "Those who were opposed to it will probably still be opposed to it."

It was not immediately clear how long lawmakers would agree to spend debating the bill or to what extent they would allow amendments.

A December committee vote on the bill took several hours as Warren, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and other critics of the legislation offered amendments that the bill's co-sponsors rejected.

In a brief interview Tuesday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said there was not yet a time agreement for the debate. Tester said it could take until next Monday to finish work on the bill.

Schumer, who revealed Friday that he would oppose the bill, publicly stayed on the sidelines for months as the legislation made its way to the floor.

He declined Tuesday morning to say why he was opposing it.

"You'll hear me later," he said.

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'Sex and the City' actress threatens Cuomo's 2020 ambitions [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dovere and Jimmy Vielkind | 03/07/2018 05:06 AM EDT

Cynthia Nixon is unlikely to beat Andrew Cuomo in the New York Democratic primary. But she'll be the biggest demonstration yet of the visceral loathing and distrust of the governor among liberals that will clearly haunt him if he tries to run for president in 2020.

The "Sex and the City" actress is in serious conversations about jumping in and has begun reaching out to potential staffers, according to a person familiar with her plans, though she has not yet pulled the trigger.

Though there's been chatter for months that Nixon would run, Cuomo's team was caught by surprise Tuesday, several people close to the governor said, as word spread that she was getting more serious. The famous plotting politician received the news without any polling on Nixon or any other potential primary challenger. The governor and his team didn't expect one to materialize.

The potential showdown captures the state of Democratic politics right now: A popular two-term big state governor with a long record and a talent on the stump should make him a natural presidential front-runner. But instead, his Bill Clinton-style triangulation and personal spats has enraged an activist base that's becoming ever more energized and liberal, and ready to sign up for party infighting with their own celebrity from outside of politics to make a point.

Cuomo has avoided any major strategic decisions about a potential bid for president. But he and his orbit understand his problems with the left — however tribal it is, and however block-headed and unfair they believe it is — would be a problem if he does give it a go.

Already, national operatives talk regularly about how they don't like Cuomo or his politics, or that they know enough other people who don't.

Now, with New York's very late primary — it's not until mid-September — Nixon will have months to exploit that distrust on a range of issues. Cuomo's 2014 primary challenger, Zephyr Teachout, won more than a third of the vote — without Nixon's star power.

"What we saw was with a weird name and basically no money or name recognition, almost immediately when I started running, people came out of the woodwork in various communities saying they felt betrayed, he wasn't supporting Democrats or addressing the real issues," Teachout said on Tuesday. "The core dissatisfaction has not only remained, but it's grown."

Many Cuomo defenders are confounded by all the ill will. Of all the prospective Democratic presidential candidates, he has one of the thickest records of actual progressive accomplishments, from legalizing gay marriage early in 2011 to passing significant gun laws in 2013 after the Sandy Hook shooting, to actions around climate change and economic growth.

In recent months, Cuomo has stepped up nationally — he used to insist that doing his job as governor required avoiding politics beyond the borders of New York — and started swinging at President Donald Trump and Republicans about the tax bill, gun laws and more.

But he also has a record of getting police to clear out Occupy protesters and stopping tax increases. And then there's his non-stop grudge match with eager lefty avatar New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, and years of Cuomo propping up a renegade faction of state senators who have helped keep the chamber in Republican control.

Enter Ms. Could Be Big.

"For eight years, this guy has governed as a Republican in New York, literally empowering a Republican State Senate, bashing Democrats, putting forward a centrist agenda and coasting on his last name," said one person who's spoken to Nixon about a possible run. "Add to that, the fact that his administration is perpetually mired in corruption and the subways don't work. The guy's got real problems."

Alarms went off in Cuomo's orbit Tuesday as the news spread, and supporters quickly went on the attack.

Christine Quinn, the former New York City council speaker and state Democratic party vice chair, pointed out that Cuomo has already been endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign, the state Service Employee International Union and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. She said more are coming.

"The guy's record from a left perspective is flawless. It's just flawless," Quinn said.

But Cuomo has done some things that have very much rankled the left.

In 2012, he pushed to reduce pension benefits for new public employees in exchange for allowing legislators to draw their own district lines, breaking a campaign promise to reformers and helping Republicans retain their grip on power in the state Senate. Cuomo later angered teachers by pushing a new evaluation system, and has increased aid to public schools at a level that they say is not adequate.

Cuomo also rolled back New York's estate tax, eliminated the dedicated bank tax, cut corporate taxes and has increased economic development spending that critics on the left and right deride as corporate welfare. The governor says it's important to change the perception that New York is not business-friendly; in 2014, he ran for reelection with the endorsement of the state's business council but not New York's AFL-CIO.

Since Teachout's 2014 challenge, though, Cuomo has tacked considerably to the left. He banned natural gas hydrofracking about a month after the election, responding to environmental activism that Teachout harnessed in upstate areas.

Cuomo also softened his rhetoric on teachers, and in his second term has pushed to raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour and create a new scholarship to make public colleges "tuition free" for middle-class students. He has pushed through criminal justice reforms, including an increase in the age of criminal responsibility and, this year, a proposal to eliminate cash bail.

Politics in New York is always personal. And Quinn — who, in the small world of New York Democratic infighting, lost a 2013 mayoral primary in which Nixon campaigned for de Blasio — mocked the actress for saying recently that she felt called into running.

"You need to run for a reason," Quinn said. "And you need to run not just because of your own desire, your own 'calling.'"

Cuomo pollster Jef Pollock also dismissed Nixon for waging "a vanity run." He argued that the 2014 primary was driven by anger over Cuomo's stance on fracking and fights with public employee unions that has faded in the four years since. Pollock said that anger has been replaced by support for Cuomo's efforts since to raise the minimum wage to \$15, provide hurricane relief to Puerto Rico, expand paid family and more.

"In Democratic primaries all over the country, I have looked at the outsider/insider dynamic, and voters are overwhelmingly in favor of a candidate with real government experience over an outsider, particularly a celebrity," Pollock said. "They look to Washington, D.C. and see what a celebrity in office means, and they don't want anything like that."

Plus, Pollock argued, Nixon is the wrong type of celebrity.

"Let's not overstate the name ID of Cynthia Nixon statewide. It's not that high, and in a primary electorate in New York State that is far more demographically attuned to '60 Minutes' more than 'Sex in the City,' I wouldn't think that Nixon or the characters she has played have the kind of broad recognition one would need to run in New York State," he said.

In a familiar dynamic for Democrats, Nixon's prospective run has operatives in New York worried that it will sap attention and resources from the seven House races in the state Democrats are looking to flip and that are crucial to taking the majority. Cuomo had said he'd focus on campaigning in those districts this year.

But Jonathan Tasini, a Bernie Sanders supporter who ran in a New York Senate primary in 2006 to the left of Hillary Clinton, said he's hoping a Nixon bid exposes Cuomo's problems with the left to the country.

"What I'd say to a person in Iowa is, be very, very suspicious about what Andrew Cuomo says. He's a very tactical politician who has no deep-seeded ideology or moral compass. It's all about tactics and how he could win," Tasini said.

Cuomo, for his part, chose not to engage on the topic of his potential challengers Tuesday.

"On people who may or may not run for governor on both sides of the aisle," he said on a conference call with reporters, "that's up to them and we'll deal with it as the campaign progresses."

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To: Comm - National [Comm-National@dccc.org]
Subject: NBC News: Latino early voting increased 174 percent over 2014, Democrats say

Latino early voting increased 174 percent over 2014, Democrats say

"The proof is now in the pudding," said Dan Sena, executive director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which spent about \$30 million to engage minorities.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/latino-early-voting-increased-174-percent-over-2014-democrats-say-n935801>

Nov. 14, 2018 / 2:06 PM EST

By Suzanne Gamboa



AUSTIN, Texas — Having seen drastic increases in early voting by Latinos and other groups, Democratic leaders said Tuesday that investment in turning out their votes has to be part of the budget and not an add-on.

Rep. Ben Ray Luján, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which is tasked with winning the House majority for Democrats, said the DCCC's internal analytics show that in this election Latino early voting increased 174 percent over 2014.

In addition, early voting increased 157 percent for African-Americans, 218 percent for Asian American Pacific Islanders and 306 percent for millennials, Luján said in a conference call hosted by Latino Victory Fund.

"The proof is now in the pudding," said Dan Sena, DCCC executive director. "Many of us have known for a long time that investing in communities of color and the Latino community is critical to the long-term success of the party. It's my hope now that folks across the Democratic allies will recognize that."

Luján and Sena said the DCCC crafted a message that created urgency without making it feel overly heavy or sad, that emphasized the positive and provided a reason to participate.

"We wanted voting to feel good rather than what is at stake and kids in cages and Trump," Sena said.

Their outreach included a television ad that urged Latinos to vote and did not campaign for a specific candidate in several districts critical for Democrats' battle for the House.

"The fact that we could go up on television with a national GOTV ad is unprecedented for the national committee to do," Sena said.

The DCCC spent about \$30 million to engage minority voters. The effort included contracting minorities and minority businesses for some of the engagement.

Sena said that Latino mailings were done by Latinos, Latino radio ads were done by Latinos and the doors to Latinos homes were knocked on by Latinos.

"From the top down we careful we hit all the cultural pieces correctly," he said.

Luján also said that the DCCC spent more than \$21 million on Spanish language advertising on radio, TV, digital and field investment on Latino candidates through coordinated and independent expenditures.

Sena and Luján said the outreach to Latinos and other minorities was not limited to turning the community out only for Latino candidates and the committee made sure to contact voters and potential voters multiple times in multiple ways.

"The Latinos in New Hampshire they got multiple (contacts) through phones, through text, through the mail. Every Latino, every African-American, every Hispanic vote in the country, regardless of the number of Latinos in a district, mattered this cycle and that's ultimately what has led to our success," Sena said.

For the election, several Democratic political fundraising committeescommissioned the polling firm Latino Decisions to conduct polling and focus groups and try out some messaging of Latinos.

"Latinos showed up to the polls because we talked to them, we listened to them, our candidates connected with their personal stories, we knocked on their doors we reached out online," Luján said.

Julián Castro, former Housing secretary under President Barack Obama and a potential 2020 presidential candidate, said the increased turnout is a good sign.

"There's clear enthusiasm among Latinos," Castro said, "and that bodes well for the country going forward."

Saludos,

Javier Gamboa

HISPANIC MEDIA DIRECTOR · DCCC

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From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 10:50:23 AM
To: Comm - National [Comm-National@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all/National: New York Times: How Much Can Primaries Predict the General Election?

Looping comm-national for the Texas -> general pieces.

How Much Can Primaries Predict the General Election?

Nate Cohn // The Upshot, NYT

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/upshot/texas-primary-democrats-voter-enthusiasm-turnout.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Fnate-cohn&action=click&contentCollection=undefined®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

The 2018 elections formally begin with the Texas primary on Tuesday, and early voting tallies are already being interpreted as yet another sign of Democratic strength heading into the midterms.

It's not without reason. In early voting, Democratic primary voters outnumbered Republicans in Texas by a margin of 52 percent to 48 percent. The number of Democratic early voters, presumably motivated in part by distaste for President Trump, more than doubled compared with 2014.

The surging Democratic tallies are even viewed by some as a sign that Texas may emerge as a fairly competitive state in the midterm elections.

Is that a reasonable conclusion? Looking back at primary elections since 2004, there's some reason to think so. Without obvious extenuating circumstances (like a high-profile presidential primary for one party but not the other), primary performance can be cautiously interpreted as a harbinger of the general election.

In terms of this year's midterm elections, there are two ways to look at the primaries: at the national level; and by state and district. Over all, the national primary vote is a rough if imperfect indicator of the national political environment. The primary vote by state and district is an equally rough, though potentially more analytically useful, measure of partisanship.

Perhaps the most straightforward way to judge whether primary results can foreshadow the general election is to compare the primary vote of the average congressional district with the eventual average congressional district result in the midterm election.

This seems to do a decent job of prediction, based on limited data going back to 2004, using vote history data from L2, a nonpartisan vendor of voter files. The two notable exceptions — 2004 and 2012 — are fairly easily dismissed, since only one party had a presidential primary in those years. However, there just aren't many data points, so caution is warranted.

National Primary Vote Generally Correlates With National House Vote

It doesn't hold well in years where only one party has a presidential primary, like 2012 or 2004.

45%
50%
55%
60%
60%
55%



Source: Upshot analysis of vote history data from L2. Primary results weighted by turnout in years with multiple primaries (like state and presidential). Data only includes major party vote.

In a way, primaries resemble special elections. Nonpresidential primaries are relatively low-turnout affairs that provide a clue about which side's base is more engaged. That's extremely important in midterm elections.

But there are differences, too: Primary turnout is less volatile than in special elections, which often have ultralow voter participation. Primaries occur in almost every jurisdiction in the country, while special elections (particularly if analyzed without adjusting for population) are often deeply unrepresentative. And primaries are partisan ballots, not contests between two candidates of different parties, so you can interpret their results as a more direct proxy for partisanship preference.

State and District

The national primary vote might be somewhat predictive of the national House vote, but it isn't nearly so simple to make a similar prediction by state or district.

How could that be? In most states, voters are confined to one party in the primary but may vote for whoever they like in the general. So the primary vote is an imperfect measure of partisan preference, not a measure of how voters feel about a particular race.

But that doesn't mean it's useless. Presidential vote choice, the most common indicator of a district's partisanship, is also a deeply imperfect measure, so there's value in adding the primaries to the mix.

There are places like West Virginia, where Republicans dominate in presidential elections but where the right kind of Democrat can take advantage of the state's latent Democratic tradition. Conor Lamb might be doing so in the special election in Pennsylvania's 18th District, which adjoins West Virginia and still has a Democratic registration advantage. And there are places like Orange County, Calif., or the suburbs of Dallas and Atlanta where one could wonder whether a strongly Republican tradition will cut against Democratic chances in places where Mr. Trump struggled.

The primary vote is another good measure of the partisan makeup of a state.

Take one of this year's first primary states: Illinois. Based on recent presidential election results, it might appear that a Republican incumbent, Mike Bost, should be well positioned to hold a district that Mr. Trump won by 15 points. But this district has a strong Democratic tradition; Senator Tammy Duckworth actually carried Mr. Bost's district by more than a 10-point margin against an incumbent Republican last November.

Primary votes there reveal the district's Democratic tradition: Even in 2016, Democratic primary voters outnumbered Republicans in the presidential primary. This suggests that Mr. Bost might be much more vulnerable than the typical Republican in a district that voted for Mr. Trump by so much.

Primary Vote Is a Useful but Imperfect Measure of a State's Partisanship

High-profile primaries, like the Indiana presidential primary in 2008 or Arkansas' 2010 Democratic senate primary, can throw off a long-term trend.

Mean statewide primary vote, 2004–2014.

% Dem.

90

80

70

60

50

40

30

Arkansas

Indiana

Minnesota

Tennessee

2004

2006

2008

2010

2012

2014

2016

It's possible that Mr. Trump's presidency has realigned partisanship along the lines of the 2016 presidential election, and that Mr. Bost, for example, will be fairly safe in his district. If true, the primaries will be one of our first clues.

Democrats might see a big surge in primary turnout in well-educated, traditionally Republican areas, like the suburbs of Dallas or Houston. In 2016, the primary vote there was 2-to-1 in favor of the Republicans.

The primary vote does a decent job of anticipating this kind of change in partisan allegiance. Democratic primary strength has steadily eroded in many Southern states where the party was once strong in down-ballot races, for instance.

But that doesn't mean you can just take primary results at face value. In Indiana, the 2008 Democratic primary yielded a spike in Democratic turnout that presaged a Democratic surge in the general. But the Republicans didn't have a competitive presidential primary at all — so you couldn't look at the overall primary vote breakdown and conclude that the state was now solidly Democratic.

The competitive Democratic primary in the 2010 Arkansas Senate race probably kept the state's primary vote from trending toward the Republicans in that year, even as politically similar Tennessee broke hard toward the Republicans.

The lesson is that it's difficult to read too much into the result of a single primary. It may be more useful to look at multiple years of data, in part because there are unique circumstances in individual primaries, like whether one party had a high-profile contest to generate national media coverage. It's also important to consider the circumstances in each state, such as whether the primary contest is open or closed. But if you can account for this, there's useful information.

In Texas, Republicans are counting on the state's G.O.P. tradition to insulate them from Mr. Trump's unpopularity. That's especially true in well-educated, suburban districts like Texas' Seventh or 32nd District, where Mr. Trump lost but Republicans traditionally have a 2-to-1 edge in the primary vote. In theory, that kind of Republican tradition should be a meaningful drag on Democratic chances compared with the typical area where Mr. Trump was defeated.

A strong Democratic showing in a partisan primary in Texas would indicate that Republicans can't count on vestigial partisan strength to insulate them from Mr. Trump's distinct weakness among college-educated voters.

Alone, a Democratic primary ballot victory won't make the Democrats favorites in any of Texas' Republican-held congressional districts, let alone statewide. But it would suggest that Republicans should not be optimistic about their chances to survive a wave election in Texas, and in well-educated, traditionally Republican suburbs elsewhere across the country.

Sent: 3/6/2018 6:08:34 AM

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District by District

- [AZ-01: Arizona Daily Sun: Campaign 2018 : Republicans line up against O'Halleran](#)
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- [CO-06: Colorado Politics: Abortion rights group endorses Democrat Jason Crow in 6th Congressional District primary](#)
- [IL-10: Daily Herald: GOP congressional candidate's ad contains inaccuracies about an opponent](#)
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- [PA-18: Post-Gazette: Democrat Conor Lamb hopeful in a district Trump won handily](#)
- [TX-all: Dallas Morning News: Battle for Texas starts Tuesday as primary voters pick their nominees for November](#)
- [TX-All: Huffington Post: Democratic Party Set To Show Its Force In Nation's First 2018 Primary](#)
- [TX-07: Houston Chronicle: Houston emerges as key battleground in the battle for Congress](#)
- [TX-23: Newsmax: Female Candidates Way Up as Midterm Primaries Begin](#)
- [TX-32: Daily Beast: Top House Republican Bought Stock In Steve Wynn's Company The Day Sexual Misconduct Allegations Surfaced](#)
- [WSJ: North Korea Willing to Talk Denuclearization With U.S.](#)

By Jonathan Cheng, Andrew Jeong

March 6, 2018

North Korea told a visiting South Korean delegation that it was willing to hold talks with the U.S. about giving up nuclear weapons and normalizing relations with Washington, officials in Seoul said Tuesday.

After meetings between envoys from the South and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Pyongyang signaled a "clear intent to pursue denuclearization," according to Chung Eui-yong, South Korea's national security adviser.

North Korea said that it wouldn't conduct nuclear or missile testing during any talks, Mr. Chung said. Mr. Kim also told the South that he would be willing to meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the inter-Korean truce village of Panmunjom in late April, in what would be the third-ever inter-Korean summit.

[Washington Post: Former Trump aide Sam Nunberg called before grand jury, says he will refuse to go](#)

By Josh Dawsey, Phillip Rucker

March 5, 2018

Former Trump campaign aide Sam Nunberg publicly defied the Justice Department special counsel on Monday, announcing in an extraordinary series of media interviews that he had been subpoenaed to appear in front of a federal grand jury investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election but that he will refuse to go.

"Let him arrest me," Nunberg told The Washington Post in his first stop on a media blitz, saying he does not plan to comply with a subpoena from special counsel Robert S. Mueller III to hand over emails and other documents related to President Trump and nine current and former Trump advisers.

"Mr. Mueller should understand I am not going in on Friday" to the grand jury, he added. It is unclear what actions Mueller might take if Nunberg does not appear.

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By Ana Swanson, Mark Landler, Maggie Haberman

March 5, 2018

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The intense maneuvering, which began before Mr. Trump's unexpected announcement of the tariffs last Thursday, is likely to delay any formal rollout of the measures until next week, according to several officials who have been briefed on the deliberations.

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By Scott Wong

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Republicans say House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy has a clear path to succeeding Speaker Paul Ryan (Wis.) in November — if Republicans lose the House and he runs for minority leader.

The California Republican would need just a majority vote of the GOP conference and not 218 votes — a threshold he couldn't meet during his failed bid for Speaker in 2015 — to become minority leader.

And that threshold is within reach for someone considered President Trump's closest ally on the Hill, who regularly travels the country raising cash for his colleagues, several GOP lawmakers said.

"Hopefully in November, we're talking about a third term for Speaker Ryan," said one House GOP lawmaker. "But if that's not the case, I think Kevin's the guy, and that comes from a more conservative member."

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"We are extremely worried about the consequences of a trade war and are urging the White House to not advance with this plan," said AshLee Strong, a spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.).

NBC Latino: With no permanent immigration fix by DACA deadline, Dreamers amp political mobilization

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National Journal: As Trump's Deadline Passes, House GOP Still Tweaking Immigration Bill

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Among the changes being considered is widening the portion of the bill that grants protected status to immigrants who came to the country illegally as children to include roughly 1 million more immigrants.

Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, a lead sponsor of the bill with Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte, said some Republican members want leadership to grant the protected status to the estimated 1.8 million people who came to the country illegally as children, not just the roughly 800,000 who signed up for President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Roll Call: Steve Israel to Democrats: Don't Be Distracted by 2018 Midterms

By Simone Pathé

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Steve Israel, former two-time chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, isn't giving the DCCC his time this year. He's taking a longer view of House Democratic campaign politics.

He's been sounding the alarm, urging Democratic activists and donors to look beyond flipping the House in 2018, which he's still not very bullish about, and focus on controlling the state infrastructure that will allow them to hold whatever gains they make in 2018 and pick up more seats after the next redistricting.

"Republican governors in 2012 built a redistricting firewall for the exact environment they are in," Israel said in an interview Monday. He can see Democrats making gains near the low 20s, but is not yet confident Democrats will gain the 24 seats necessary to win back the House.

The hill: Trump breaks with GOP, sparking new tensions

By Alexander Bolton

March 6, 2018

President Trump is publicly breaking with congressional Republicans on trade and guns, causing tensions within the party at a time when lawmakers hope to be united ahead of the midterm elections.

Republican strategists and nonpartisan political experts say Trump appears to be looking beyond this fall's elections, when GOP control of Congress is at stake, to his own bid for a second term in 2020.

"Clearly he's targeting Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Those were, all four, key battleground states for him in the last election and the states he would have to win if he's going to win reelection," said Saul Anuzis, a political strategist and former chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

Washington Post: With an eye on November, students and well-funded groups are teaming up on gun regulation

By Tal Abbady, Michael Scherer

March 5, 2018

Young activists mobilized by the slaying of 17 students and faculty at a high school in Florida have begun to focus their fury on bringing change in November's midterm elections.

As gun regulation efforts continue to face obstacles in Washington and state capitols, the students are appearing at candidate events, mounting voter registration drives and threatening to haunt politicians who stand in the way of their demands. And well-funded professional organizations that have long focused on curbing gun violence are rushing to find ways to harness their energy for the fall election.

Dozens of high school students showed up Friday afternoon for a voter registration rally at a park 23 miles from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the site of last month's deadly attack. They pointed to the student activists at Stoneman Douglas, who had promoted the event amid tweets with the hashtag #VoteThemOut, as their inspiration.

Washington Examiner: GOP fights 'complacency,' 45 House members trail Dems in fundraising

By Paul Bedard

March 5, 2018

House Republicans, many of whom have never been in a tough race, are being warned by party leaders to brace for an anti-GOP, anti-Trump "wave" that could sweep them out of office if they don't batten down the hatches now.

In personal pitches from House Speaker Paul Ryan and in leadership memos, members are being urged to step up fundraising, hire campaign staff, and draw up a battle plan that focuses on local issues and legislative achievements.

"The message from the speaker," said top Team Ryan campaign aide Kevin Seifert, "is if you've not had a race in awhile, you need to get ready, and you need to start preparing early for a campaign cycle that is going to be fairly different than you've had."

Politico: Pence to spend the week in campaign mode

By Matthew Nussbaum

March 5, 2018

Vice President Mike Pence will continue his campaign-style blitz around the country this week as Republicans scramble to stave off what they fear could be a Democratic wave in the 2018 midterm elections.

Pence has pledged to be a regular presence on the trail, where he is seen as a popular speaker and gifted fundraiser, without President Donald Trump's flair for controversy.

Pence will travel to Iowa, Nebraska, Kentucky and Ohio this week for a mix of official and campaign events, a White House aide said. The trips reflect a strategy of mixing official events to promote tax cuts with campaign events for Republican candidates.

AZ-01: Arizona Daily Sun: Campaign 2018 : Republicans line up against O'Halleran

By Emery Cowan

3/4/18

Republican candidates are lining up to challenge freshman Democratic Rep. Tom O'Halleran of Sedona for the House seat from Congressional District 1 seat in the House of Representatives, which stretches through much of northeast and east-central Arizona, from the Utah border to Oracle and Marana just outside Tucson, and includes Flagstaff.

Retired Air Force pilot Wendy Rogers, who has run for Congress in the past three elections, has again thrown her hat into the race. A supporter of stronger border security, including President Trump's border wall, and better equipping the military, Rogers lost in the primary in 2016.

Tiffany Shedd, a farmer and small business lawyer from Eloy, is venturing into politics for the first time. In her campaign platform, Shedd promises to never cast a vote or take action that in any way infringes upon Second Amendment rights, emphasizes limiting federal power and advocates the repeal of Obamacare in favor of a "patient-centered and free enterprise based system."

CA-50: SDUT: California GOP endorses Hunter for re-election

By Kristina Davis

March 3, 2018

The California Republican Party on Saturday put its endorsement behind Rep. Duncan D. Hunter in his re-election to Congress, giving a boost to his embattled campaign.

The vote came while the state party's executive board met in Sacramento.

"The California Republican Party accepted the recommendations of both San Diego and Riverside Counties to endorse Congressman Duncan Hunter," confirmed the group's spokesman, Matt Fleming.

Hunter was very appreciative of the endorsement, his spokesman Mike Harrison said Saturday. "It's a reflection of the hard work the congressman is doing not only for the district but also country," Harrison said.

CO-06: Colorado Politics: Abortion rights group endorses Democrat Jason Crow in 6th Congressional District primary

By Ernest Luning

March 5, 2018

NARAL Pro-Choice America, an abortion rights group and one of the leading progressive political advocacy organizations, on Friday endorsed Democratic congressional candidate Jason Crow, one of four Democrats running against incumbent Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman in the 6th Congressional District.

"Mike Coffman's extreme anti-choice, anti-woman record does not reflect the voters or values of Colorado's 6th Congressional district," said Karen Middleton, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado, in a statement. "Mike Coffman has voted for abortion bans. He has voted to redefine rape. He has voted to defund Planned Parenthood. The women of CD6 deserve better. They deserve a member of Congress like Jason Crow who will truly fight for them and their rights."

Crow said he was proud to have NARAL's support.

IL-10: Daily Herald: GOP congressional candidate's ad contains inaccuracies about an opponent

By Russel Lissau

3/3/18

A Republican congressional candidate's latest video advertisement contains inaccurate or misleading information about one of his rivals.

The spot is from Libertyville's Dr. Sapan Shah, who's running for the 10th District seat in this month's GOP primary against Jeremy Wynes of Highland Park and Doug Bennett of Deerfield. The 30-second ad targets Wynes.

After a brief comment from Shah, a voice-over accuses Wynes of lying about Shah's resume. But the video never identifies or corrects any statements from Wynes.

Instead, it attacks Wynes' work history and where he's lived, sometimes erroneously.

The voice-over accurately says Wynes wasn't born in the 10th District. Wynes was born in Galesburg, a city in western Illinois, and he grew up in Milan, near the Iowa border.

MS: POLITICO - Cochran resigns effective April 1
By Burgess Everett, John Bresnahan, Kevin Robillard
March 5, 2018

Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) will resign from the Senate on April 1, his office announced Monday, triggering a second Senate election in Mississippi this fall and reshaping the leadership of one of Congress's most powerful committees. "I regret my health has become an ongoing challenge," Cochran said in a statement released on Monday afternoon. Cochran is the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Mississippi GOP Gov. Phil Bryant will select Cochran's replacement, who will hold the seat until the special election. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has urged Bryant to appoint himself, according to a person familiar with the discussions. But late Monday, Republicans said they doubt Bryant will do so, and they are fretting about how to keep conservative state Sen. Chris McDaniel, a former Cochran challenger, out of the Senate.

NC-09: Fayetteville Observer: Our View: Full ballot means a hot election to come
By Editorial Board
3/5/18

Even before the serious campaigning begins, it's safe to predict — maybe even guarantee — that this year's election is going to be a barn-burner. Interest is running as high as we've seen for a mid-term election. It's clear that the voting public is already energized after a full term of turbulence in the General Assembly and a chaotic first year of the Trump administration.

Both of the major political parties have lived up to their promises of competing for every General Assembly seat this year. Democrats have fielded candidates for every House and Senate seat in the Republican-dominated General Assembly. Republicans have candidates running in every race save for one Wilson county House seat where they plan to support an unaffiliated candidate who's running.

NJ-03: Star Ledger Editorial: On guns, N.J. Congressman's rhetoric doesn't match his horrid record
By Star-Ledger Editorial Board
3/5/18

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3rd Dist.) has posted a five-point plan to "make communities safer" on his website, measures that he believes will help solve the epidemic of gun massacres in our country while protecting the Second Amendment rights he holds sacred.

Point 1 calls for stronger background checks, one that covers every gun purchase in America - a laudable aim, shared by 93 percent of Americans and 89 percent of NRA members.

He does not mention that he was against strengthening the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) in 2015, voting against a bipartisan "Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act," and refusing to co-sponsor the bill when it was redrafted last year.

NJ-04/NJ-07: Star-Ledger: Protesters are coming to these 6 towns in N.J. today. Here's why.
By Kelly Heyboer
3/5/18

Under President Donald Trump's original plan, March 5 was supposed to be a do-or-die day in the debate over the future of the DACA program.

Trump planned to kill the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program on that date unless Congress finally passed a new immigration reform plan.

A series of court challenges has put the plan to officially end DACA on hold. But, immigration activists are still marking the date as a symbol of their struggle to hold on to the program to give protections to immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

New Jersey activists plan to hold a series of protests -- six rallies over seven hours -- in six municipalities across the state Monday.

NY-19: Mid-Hudson News: DACA deadline brings protestors to Faso's Kingston office

By MidHudsonNews

3/5/18

Some 50 people protested outside Congressman John Faso's (R, NY-19) Kingston office today (Monday) to call on him to support a "clean" DACA bill.

March 5 was supposed to be the deadline for Congress to come up with a plan for so-called dreamers, those with the status of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Among those who protested in Kingston with the group "Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson," was Alan Castillo, 28, who was brought here from Mexico when he was four years old.

He and the other 10 dreamers who attended the protest are calling for a "clean" dream act with no funding for the wall on the Mexican border or for immigration enforcement.

"I have been here for about 24 years and I pay my dues, I pay my taxes, I pay my fair share; all I am asking for is clean treatment," he said after the rally.

NY-22: HuffPo: 'It's Fake News!': Congresswoman Who Said Most Mass Shooters Are Democrats Cuts Off Interview

By Igor Bobic

March 5, 2018

Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-N.Y.) walked away from a television interview on Monday after she was asked about her claim that Democrats are more prone to be mass shooters.

The first-term congresswoman made the comment last month in the wake of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting after she criticized the government for failing to act on several tips that might have prevented the deaths of 17 students and adults.

"It's interesting that so many of these people that commit the mass murders end up being Democrats. But the media doesn't talk about that either," Tenney said during a radio interview.

PA-18: Post-Gazette: Democrat Conor Lamb hopeful in a district Trump won handily

By Tracie Mauriello

March 5, 2018

He has the idealism of a political newcomer, the drive of a federal prosecutor, the stamina of a Marine and the frustration of a voter tired of Washington gridlock.

Conor Lamb is all those things and one thing more: a candidate who gives Democrats a fighting chance to take the 18th congressional district. The last time that seat changed hands was in 2002 after redistricting pushed Democrat U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle into the 14th District. Republican Tim Murphy won the seat in the newly gerrymandered district and sailed easily through re-election seven times before he resigned in disgrace last year.

Now, the 33-year-old Mr. Lamb has a chance in the March 13 special election in which Republican state Rep. Rick Saccone and Libertarian Drew Miller also are in the running.

TX-all: Dallas Morning News: Battle for Texas starts Tuesday as primary voters pick their nominees for November

By Gromers Jeffers

March 5, 2018

Voters on Tuesday will start the process of determining whether Texas will continue to move to the conservative right, or if Democrats, at long last, will make the state more of a battleground.

Democrats and Republicans are making their selections for the state's top offices, including U.S. senator, governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and other top posts.

Also on the ballot are local elections throughout the state for Congress and the Texas Legislature, including hordes of judicial and criminal justice contests.

Most analysts will focus on North Texas, the scene of some of the hottest contests in the Lone Star State. Dallas and Fort Worth area voters will help determine the future makeup of the Texas Senate, voting in three critical battles, including two GOP incumbents being challenged their primary.

TX-All: Huffington Post: Democratic Party Set To Show Its Force In Nation's First 2018 Primary

By Amanda Terkel

March 6, 2018

Texas holds the nation's first primaries of the year on Tuesday, previewing whether reinvigorated Democrats will turn out in big numbers for the November midterms.

Early voting in Texas, which lasted 11 days and ended on Friday, is way up since the last midterm elections — a nearly 50 percent increase. In fact, Texas' 15 largest counties have broken records for early turnout in a non-presidential election year.

The increase was driven by Democrats.

More than 465,245 early votes were cast in the state's Democratic primaries this year, compared to over 420,329 in the Republican races. In 2014, by contrast, Republicans outpaced Democrats in early voting — 365,423 voters to 226,730.

TX-07: Houston Chronicle: Houston emerges as key battleground in the battle for Congress

By Kevin Diaz

March 5, 2018

Support for the president was down, "generic" polls favored the opposition party, and a record number of challengers were filing for office across the nation.

That was the story of 2010 midterm elections, the midpoint of President Barack Obama's first term in office, when Republicans rode a tea party wave to a majority in the House of Representatives.

As Texas voters go to the polls on Tuesday in the first primaries of 2018, Democrats hope to return the favor with a "blue wave" that takes back the House - a feat that would qualify as a seismic setback for President Donald Trump. Also on the ballot are races for U.S. Senate, governor, the Texas House and Senate and a long list of state and county races.

TX-23: Newsmax: Female Candidates Way Up as Midterm Primaries Begin

By Brian Freeman

3/5/18

Midterm elections officially kick off this week as voters go the polls in primaries in Texas, where a record number of at least 50 women are running for congressional seats, ABC News reported on Sunday. It is part of a women's movement that is apparently on the rise, as nationally there are more than 400 female congressional candidates, which is double the number just two years ago. Texas is certainly symbolic of the trend, as the state currently has only three of its 36 congressional districts represented by women. Although there are plenty of female conservatives running, part of the inspiration for so many women candidates is a reaction to what many say is President Donald Trump's divisiveness

TX-32: Daily Beast: Top House Republican Bought Stock In Steve Wynn's Company The Day Sexual Misconduct Allegations Surfaced

Lachlan Markay

3/5/18

Some investments pay off. Not this one.

At least one member of Congress invested in disgraced casino mogul Steve Wynn's company at exactly the wrong time. Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), the chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee, reported acquiring stock in Wynn Resorts on the same day that the Wall Street Journal reported on widespread allegations of sexual misconduct against the company's chief executive. Within two weeks, both had sold their shares—at a considerable loss.

Sessions spokesperson Caroline Boothe said the transactions were made by the congressman's wife, who manages the family's finances, and were entirely "performance-based."

Sent: 3/6/2018 6:08:32 AM

DCCC Press Clips 3/6/18

Driving the Day

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WSJ: North Korea Willing to Talk Denuclearization With U.S.

By Jonathan Cheng, Andrew Jeong

March 6, 2018

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President Trump is publicly breaking with congressional Republicans on trade and guns, causing tensions within the party at a time when lawmakers hope to be united ahead of the midterm elections.

Republican strategists and nonpartisan political experts say Trump appears to be looking beyond this fall's elections, when GOP control of Congress is at stake, to his own bid for a second term in 2020.

"Clearly he's targeting Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Those were, all four, key battleground states for him in the last election and the states he would have to win if he's going to win reelection," said Saul Anuzis, a political strategist and former chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

Washington Post: With an eye on November, students and well-funded groups are teaming up on gun regulation

By Tal Abbady, Michael Scherer

March 5, 2018

Young activists mobilized by the slaying of 17 students and faculty at a high school in Florida have begun to focus their fury on bringing change in November's midterm elections.

As gun regulation efforts continue to face obstacles in Washington and state capitols, the students are appearing at candidate events, mounting voter registration drives and threatening to haunt politicians who stand in the way of their demands. And well-funded professional organizations that have long focused on curbing gun violence are rushing to find ways to harness their energy for the fall election.

Dozens of high school students showed up Friday afternoon for a voter registration rally at a park 23 miles from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the site of last month's deadly attack. They pointed to the student activists at Stoneman Douglas, who had promoted the event amid tweets with the hashtag #VoteThemOut, as their inspiration.

Washington Examiner: GOP fights 'complacency,' 45 House members trail Dems in fundraising

By Paul Bedard

March 5, 2018

House Republicans, many of whom have never been in a tough race, are being warned by party leaders to brace for an anti-GOP, anti-Trump "wave" that could sweep them out of office if they don't batten down the hatches now.

In personal pitches from House Speaker Paul Ryan and in leadership memos, members are being urged to step up fundraising, hire campaign staff, and draw up a battle plan that focuses on local issues and legislative achievements.

"The message from the speaker," said top Team Ryan campaign aide Kevin Seifert, "is if you've not had a race in awhile, you need to get ready, and you need to start preparing early for a campaign cycle that is going to be fairly different than you've had."

Politico: Pence to spend the week in campaign mode

By Matthew Nussbaum

March 5, 2018

Vice President Mike Pence will continue his campaign-style blitz around the country this week as Republicans scramble to stave off what they fear could be a Democratic wave in the 2018 midterm elections.

Pence has pledged to be a regular presence on the trail, where he is seen as a popular speaker and gifted fundraiser, without President Donald Trump's flair for controversy.

Pence will travel to Iowa, Nebraska, Kentucky and Ohio this week for a mix of official and campaign events, a White House aide said. The trips reflect a strategy of mixing official events to promote tax cuts with campaign events for Republican candidates.

AZ-01: Arizona Daily Sun: Campaign 2018 : Republicans line up against O'Halleran

By Emery Cowan

3/4/18

Republican candidates are lining up to challenge freshman Democratic Rep. Tom O'Halleran of Sedona for the House seat from Congressional District 1 seat in the House of Representatives, which stretches through much of northeast and east-central Arizona, from the Utah border to Oracle and Marana just outside Tucson, and includes Flagstaff.

Retired Air Force pilot Wendy Rogers, who has run for Congress in the past three elections, has again thrown her hat into the race. A supporter of stronger border security, including President Trump's border wall, and better equipping the military, Rogers lost in the primary in 2016.

Tiffany Shedd, a farmer and small business lawyer from Eloy, is venturing into politics for the first time. In her campaign platform, Shedd promises to never cast a vote or take action that in any way infringes upon Second Amendment rights, emphasizes limiting federal power and advocates the repeal of Obamacare in favor of a "patient-centered and free enterprise based system."

CA-50: SDUT: California GOP endorses Hunter for re-election

By Kristina Davis

March 3, 2018

The California Republican Party on Saturday put its endorsement behind Rep. Duncan D. Hunter in his re-election to Congress, giving a boost to his embattled campaign.

The vote came while the state party's executive board met in Sacramento.

"The California Republican Party accepted the recommendations of both San Diego and Riverside Counties to endorse Congressman Duncan Hunter," confirmed the group's spokesman, Matt Fleming.

Hunter was very appreciative of the endorsement, his spokesman Mike Harrison said Saturday. "It's a reflection of the hard work the congressman is doing not only for the district but also country," Harrison said.

CO-06: Colorado Politics: Abortion rights group endorses Democrat Jason Crow in 6th Congressional District primary

By Ernest Luning

March 5, 2018

NARAL Pro-Choice America, an abortion rights group and one of the leading progressive political advocacy organizations, on Friday endorsed Democratic congressional candidate Jason Crow, one of four Democrats running against incumbent Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman in the 6th Congressional District.

"Mike Coffman's extreme anti-choice, anti-woman record does not reflect the voters or values of Colorado's 6th Congressional district," said Karen Middleton, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado, in a statement. "Mike Coffman has voted for abortion bans. He has voted to redefine rape. He has voted to defund Planned Parenthood. The women of CD6 deserve better. They deserve a member of Congress like Jason Crow who will truly fight for them and their rights."

Crow said he was proud to have NARAL's support.

JL-10: Daily Herald: GOP congressional candidate's ad contains inaccuracies about an opponent

By Russel Lissau

3/3/18

A Republican congressional candidate's latest video advertisement contains inaccurate or misleading information about one of his rivals.

The spot is from Libertyville's Dr. Sapan Shah, who's running for the 10th District seat in this month's GOP primary against Jeremy Wynes of Highland Park and Doug Bennett of Deerfield. The 30-second ad targets Wynes.

After a brief comment from Shah, a voice-over accuses Wynes of lying about Shah's resume. But the video never identifies or corrects any statements from Wynes.

Instead, it attacks Wynes' work history and where he's lived, sometimes erroneously.

The voice-over accurately says Wynes wasn't born in the 10th District. Wynes was born in Galesburg, a city in western Illinois, and he grew up in Milan, near the Iowa border.

NC-09: Fayetteville Observer: Our View: Full ballot means a hot election to come

By Editorial Board

3/5/18

Even before the serious campaigning begins, it's safe to predict — maybe even guarantee — that this year's election is going to be a barn-burner. Interest is running as high as we've seen for a mid-term election. It's clear that the voting public is already energized after a full term of turbulence in the General Assembly and a chaotic first year of the Trump administration.

Both of the major political parties have lived up to their promises of competing for every General Assembly seat this year. Democrats have fielded candidates for every House and Senate seat in the Republican-dominated General Assembly. Republicans have candidates running in every race save for one Wilson county House seat where they plan to support an unaffiliated candidate who's running.

NJ-03: Star Ledger Editorial: On guns, N.J. Congressman's rhetoric doesn't match his horrid record

By Star-Ledger Editorial Board

3/5/18

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3rd Dist.) has posted a five-point plan to "make communities safer" on his website, measures that he believes will help solve the epidemic of gun massacres in our country while protecting the Second Amendment rights he holds sacred.

Point 1 calls for stronger background checks, one that covers every gun purchase in America - a laudable aim, shared by 93 percent of Americans and 89 percent of NRA members.

He does not mention that he was against strengthening the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) in 2015, voting against a bipartisan "Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act," and refusing to co-sponsor the bill when it was redrafted last year.

NJ-04/NJ-07: Star-Ledger: Protesters are coming to these 6 towns in N.J. today. Here's why.

By Kelly Heyboer

3/5/18

Under President Donald Trump's original plan, March 5 was supposed to be a do-or-die day in the debate over the future of the DACA program.

Trump planned to kill the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program on that date unless Congress finally passed a new immigration reform plan.

A series of court challenges has put the plan to officially end DACA on hold. But, immigration activists are still marking the date as a symbol of their struggle to hold on to the program to give protections to immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

New Jersey activists plan to hold a series of protests -- six rallies over seven hours -- in six municipalities across the state Monday.

NY-19: Mid-Hudson News: DACA deadline brings protestors to Faso's Kingston office

By MidHudsonNews

3/5/18

Some 50 people protested outside Congressman John Faso's (R, NY-19) Kingston office today (Monday) to call on him to support a "clean" DACA bill.

March 5 was supposed to be the deadline for Congress to come up with a plan for so-called dreamers, those with the status of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

Among those who protested in Kingston with the group "Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson," was Alan Castillo, 28, who was brought here from Mexico when he was four years old.

He and the other 10 dreamers who attended the protest are calling for a "clean" dream act with no funding for the wall on the Mexican border or for immigration enforcement.

"I have been here for about 24 years and I pay my dues, I pay my taxes, I pay my fair share; all I am asking for is clean treatment," he said after the rally.

NY-22: HuffPo: 'It's Fake News!': Congresswoman Who Said Most Mass Shooters Are Democrats Cuts Off Interview

By Igor Bobic

March 5, 2018

Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-N.Y.) walked away from a television interview on Monday after she was asked about her claim that Democrats are more prone to be mass shooters.

The first-term congresswoman made the comment last month in the wake of the Parkland, Florida, school shooting after she criticized the government for failing to act on several tips that might have prevented the deaths of 17 students and adults.

"It's interesting that so many of these people that commit the mass murders end up being Democrats. But the media doesn't talk about that either," Tenney said during a radio interview.

PA-18: Post-Gazette: Democrat Conor Lamb hopeful in a district Trump won handily

By Tracie Muriello

March 5, 2018

He has the idealism of a political newcomer, the drive of a federal prosecutor, the stamina of a Marine and the frustration of a voter tired of Washington gridlock.

Conor Lamb is all those things and one thing more: a candidate who gives Democrats a fighting chance to take the 18th congressional district. The last time that seat changed hands was in 2002 after redistricting pushed Democrat U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle into the 14th District. Republican Tim Murphy won the seat in the newly gerrymandered district and sailed easily through re-election seven times before he resigned in disgrace last year.

Now, the 33-year-old Mr. Lamb has a chance in the March 13 special election in which Republican state Rep. Rick Saccone and Libertarian Drew Miller also are in the running.

TX-all: Dallas Morning News: Battle for Texas starts Tuesday as primary voters pick their nominees for November

By Gromers Jeffers

March 5, 2018

Voters on Tuesday will start the process of determining whether Texas will continue to move to the conservative right, or if Democrats, at long last, will make the state more of a battleground.

Democrats and Republicans are making their selections for the state's top offices, including U.S. senator, governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and other top posts.

Also on the ballot are local elections throughout the state for Congress and the Texas Legislature, including hordes of judicial and criminal justice contests.

Most analysts will focus on North Texas, the scene of some of the hottest contests in the Lone Star State. Dallas and Fort Worth area voters will help determine the future makeup of the Texas Senate, voting in three critical battles, including two GOP incumbents being challenged their primary.

TX-All: Huffington Post: Democratic Party Set To Show Its Force In Nation's First 2018 Primary

By Amanda Terkel

March 6, 2018

Texas holds the nation's first primaries of the year on Tuesday, previewing whether reinvigorated Democrats will turn out in big numbers for the November midterms.

Early voting in Texas, which lasted 11 days and ended on Friday, is way up since the last midterm elections — a nearly 50 percent increase. In fact, Texas' 15 largest counties have broken records for early turnout in a non-presidential election year.

The increase was driven by Democrats.

More than 465,245 early votes were cast in the state's Democratic primaries this year, compared to over 420,329 in the Republican races. In 2014, by contrast, Republicans outpaced Democrats in early voting — 365,423 voters to 226,730.

TX-07: Houston Chronicle: Houston emerges as key battleground in the battle for Congress

By Kevin Diaz
March 5, 2018

Support for the president was down, "generic" polls favored the opposition party, and a record number of challengers were filing for office across the nation.

That was the story of 2010 midterm elections, the midpoint of President Barack Obama's first term in office, when Republicans rode a tea party wave to a majority in the House of Representatives.

As Texas voters go to the polls on Tuesday in the first primaries of 2018, Democrats hope to return the favor with a "blue wave" that takes back the House - a feat that would qualify as a seismic setback for President Donald Trump. Also on the ballot are races for U.S. Senate, governor, the Texas House and Senate and a long list of state and county races.

TX-23: Newsmax: Female Candidates Way Up as Midterm Primaries Begin

By Brian Freeman
3/5/18

Midterm elections officially kick off this week as voters go to the polls in primaries in Texas, where a record number of at least 50 women are running for congressional seats, ABC News reported on Sunday. It is part of a women's movement that is apparently on the rise, as nationally there are more than 400 female congressional candidates, which is double the number just two years ago. Texas is certainly symbolic of the trend, as the state currently has only three of its 36 congressional districts represented by women. Although there are plenty of female conservatives running, part of the inspiration for so many women candidates is a reaction to what many say is President Donald Trump's divisiveness

TX-32: Daily Beast: Top House Republican Bought Stock In Steve Wynn's Company The Day Sexual Misconduct Allegations Surfaced

Lachlan Markay
3/5/18

Some investments pay off. Not this one.

At least one member of Congress invested in disgraced casino mogul Steve Wynn's company at exactly the wrong time. Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), the chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee, reported acquiring stock in Wynn Resorts on the same day that the Wall Street Journal reported on widespread allegations of sexual misconduct against the company's chief executive. Within two weeks, both had sold their shares—at a considerable loss.

Sessions spokesperson Caroline Boothe said the transactions were made by the congressman's wife, who manages the family's finances, and were entirely "performance-based."

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DCCC Press Clips 2/22/18

Driving the Day

Congressional Coverage

- The Hill: Number of women running in midterms more than doubles from 2016 to 2018: report
- Politico: Trump on course for clash with House GOP over gun control

District by District

- CA-10/48: LA Times: Emily's List announces two more endorsements in California House races
- CA-25: Signal: Stern endorsement sets stage for convention battle
- CA-25/39/45/48: LA Times: Group working to elect more scientists to Congress will spend \$1 million on Los Angeles TV ads
- CA-48: OC Weekly: Protest Targets Walters, Rohrabacher, Trump and Oil Drilling Off Orange County Coast
- CA-49: Cosmopolitan: Sara Jacobs Could Be the Youngest Congresswoman Ever
- CO-06: Washington Post: GOP congressman Coffman booed at gun control town hall
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- IA-01: Associated Press: Iowa Congressman Failed to Disclose Internet Company
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- NY-21: POLITICO New York: Dylan Ratigan declares for Congress, shakes up Stefanik race
- NY-22: NY State of Politics: Tenney: Many Mass Murderers 'End Up Being Democrats'
- PA-06: Washington Monthly (opinion): GOP Congressman Ryan Costello is really losing it
- TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat
- TX-all: Austin American Statesman: Growth of Texas Democratic early voters so far outpaces Republicans
- VA-07: NPR: More Than Twice As Many Women Are Running For Congress In 2018 Compared With 2016

The Hill: Number of women running in midterms more than doubles from 2016 to 2018: report

By Avery Anapol

February 21, 2018

More than twice as many women are running for Congress in the 2018 midterm elections as were running just two years ago.

At least 431 female candidates are running or are likely to run for the House, compared to 212 in February 2016, according to NPR. In Senate races, 50 women are running or are likely to run, compared to 25 in 2016.

The wave of female candidates has mostly affected the Democratic party, according to recent data. Out of the 431 women running for the House, only 92 are Republicans.

Politico: Trump on course for clash with House GOP over gun control

By Rachel Bade, Elana Schor

February 21, 2018

President Donald Trump's tentative embrace of a narrow background-checks bill is about to hit a towering hurdle: members of his own party.

The White House is signaling support for a bipartisan bill that would enhance reporting of violent criminals to the FBI's background-check database in order to stop them from buying firearms. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) is trying to round up support for it along with the White House — a formidable duo from a party that typically shuns any talk of stricter gun measures.

But House conservatives are unwilling to sign on, unless the measure is coupled with so-called "concealed-carry" legislation backed by the NRA. Combining the two ideas would have the net effect of loosening gun controls.

CA-10/48: LA Times: Emily's List announces two more endorsements in California House races

By Christine Mai-Duc

February 21, 2018

Abortion-rights group Emily's List has thrown its weight behind two more Democrats challenging GOP incumbents in California.

The group announced Wednesday that it's endorsing Rachel Payne's candidacy against Rep. Dana Rohrabacher in Orange County, and Virginia Madueño in the race to unseat Rep. Jeff Denham in the Central Valley.

In a statement announcing the endorsements, President Stephanie Schriock highlighted Madueño's background as a small town mayor and business owner, and Payne's leadership in the tech industry.

Of the seven districts where Emily's List previously put Republican incumbents "on notice," the group, which focuses on electing pro-choice Democratic women, has endorsed six challengers.

CA-25: Signal: Stern endorsement sets stage for convention battle

By Andrew Clark

February 20, 2018

A state senator representing the southwestern portion of Santa Clarita could make waves in the 25th Congressional District primary race after he endorsed Katie Hill, the executive director for nonprofit People Assisting The Homeless, days before the Democratic state convention in San Diego.

Sen. Henry Stern, D-Calabasas, endorsed Hill Tuesday, the first official that represents part of the district to back Hill in the race. During the 2016 election, Stern campaigned with attorney Bryan Caforio, who's also running for the seat currently held by Congressman Steve Knight.

"As the senator for the Simi, Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys in the 25th, it's clear that Katie is of, by, and for the people of this district. She's unapologetic about her values and doesn't shy away from tough issues," Stern said in a statement. "Congress needs change—Congress needs Katie Hill."

CA-25/39/45/48: LA Times: Group working to elect more scientists to Congress will spend \$1 million on Los Angeles TV ads

By Sarah D. Wire

February 21, 2018

A political nonprofit working to elect scientists to Congress announced Wednesday it has reserved just over \$1 million in broadcast television air time in the Los Angeles in the two weeks leading up to June's primary.

314 Action, a 501(c)(4) social welfare group, has endorsed a trio of Democratic House candidates who are running in three different crowded and competitive Orange County races to win seats currently held by Republicans.

The group is planning on spending between \$5 million and \$7 million to support its endorsed candidates during the midterm election, said executive director Joshua Morrow.

CA-48: OC Weekly: Protest Targets Walters, Rohrabacher, Trump and Oil Drilling Off Orange County Coast

By Matt Coker

February 21, 2018

At high noon Thursday, demonstrators plan to gather in Laguna Beach to call attention to their opposition to oil drilling off the Orange County coast and three Washington, D.C., politicians: U.S. Representatives Mimi Walters (R-Irvine), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach) and President Donald Trump.

The crowd organized by the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Greenpeace USA, OFA-California, HB Huddle, Resist Here, Women for American Values and Ethics (WAVE), Mothers Out Front Tustin, Indivisible OC 45, Together We Will Orange County and SoCal Healthcare Coalition will gather in the coastal neighborhood where Walters lives but is actually within the 45th Congressional District represented by Rohrabacher.

He has come out in support of Trump's plan to restart oil drilling off coasts in the United States that are not Florida's (because of a promise made to that state's Republican governor, Rick Scott).

CA-49: Cosmopolitan: Sara Jacobs Could Be the Youngest Congresswoman Ever

By Rebecca Nelson

February 21, 2018

It's 5:30 p.m. at a trendy brewpub in Encinitas, California, with 25 beers on draft, and Sara Jacobs can't have any of them.

Jacobs, 29, a Democratic candidate for Congress in California, has invited a handful of local community college students to tell her what's on their mind: student debt, mental health services, a lack of basic health care. They'll do it over drinks, because even in 2018, the worn adage persists that a candidate should be relatable enough to have a beer with. Before the waitress pours the beer, though, she asks to see everyone's license. That's when it hits her: Jacobs doesn't have her ID.

Her campaign manager calls her political director, who walks in a few minutes later with Jacobs's wallet, and inside, her California state ID. The waitress studies it and then pours her a sorely-needed glass. You do have to be at least 25 to run for Congress, Jacobs reminds us.

CO-06: Washington Post: GOP congressman Coffman booed at gun control town hall

By Mike DeBonis

February 21, 2018

Patti Seno registered for Rep. Mike Coffman's town hall meeting expecting to ask him about health care. The deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school changed all that.

In a high school auditorium here, amid a suburban landscape scarred by the acts of mass gun violence in the nearby towns of Littleton and Aurora, Seno delivered a stern message to the five-term Republican, whose response, at times, was met with jeers.

"It took children to shake me from my comfort zone to come forward to say: Enough is enough," said the 53-year-old benefits administrator, referring to the students who have spoken out after a troubled ex-student, the alleged shooter, killed 17 people inside a Florida high school last week.

FL-all: NYT: Florida Republicans Face Mounting Pressure to Act on Gun Control

By Alex Burns

February 21, 2018

Representative Stephanie Murphy, a Democrat who represents the Orlando area, said voters in her largely suburban district had reached a breaking point on the gun issue. Ms. Murphy, who has introduced legislation to authorize the Department of Health and Human Services to study gun violence, said the government had failed to keep pace with regular people's concerns about mass killings.

"People are angry and they're outraged and they're motivated," said Ms. Murphy, who defeated an N.R.A.-backed Republican in 2016. "We were affected by Pulse less than two years ago, and here's another mass shooting."

FL-18/26: Florida Politics: Progressives target Brian Mast, Carlos Curbelo on immigration

By Mitch Perry

February 21, 2018

An immigration advocacy group on Tuesday launched a series of digital ads targeting Republican U.S. Reps. Brian Mast and Carlos Curbelo, as well as their GOP colleagues, for their role in failing to protect "Dreamers."

iAmerica Action announced it will spend \$250,000 in 27 House districts on the ads, many of which have large Latino populations.

Mast represents Florida's 18th Congressional District in Palm Beach County, while Curbelo represents Miami down to Key West as part of representing Florida's 26th Congressional district.

Both seats are considered targets for a potential Democratic flip in the 2018 election cycle.

IA-01: Associated Press: Iowa Congressman Failed to Disclose Internet Company

By Ryan Foley

February 21, 2018

— A congressman from Iowa violated House ethics rules by failing to disclose a new company that he owns, a mysterious outfit that uses one of his federal staffers in a false testimonial for its services, an Associated Press review shows.

Rep. Rod Blum was one of two directors of the Tin Moon Corp. when the internet marketing company was incorporated in May 2016, as the Republican was serving his first term, a business filing shows. Among other services, Tin Moon promises to help companies cited for federal food and drug safety violations bury their Food and Drug Administration warning letters below positive internet search results.

Tin Moon's website had listed Blum as its CEO and featured an official photo of Blum wearing his congressional pin in front of an American flag. The company removed the photo and changed Blum's title to "majority shareholder" Tuesday after the AP raised questions about House ethics rules. Tin Moon is based in the same Dubuque office as a construction software company he owns, called Digital Canal.

NJ-02: Asbury Park Press: House Democrats embrace pro-gun candidate Jeff Van Drew for Jersey Shore seat

By Bob Jordan

February 21, 2018

For a district that covers part of Ocean County, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says it will start giving fundraising and organizational support to a midterm candidate who voted against gay marriage and gun control measures backed by fellow Democrats.

Democratic state Sen. Jeff Van Drew is among four potential contenders in the party's primary election for the House seat held by the retiring Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-N.J., in New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. For more on the Jersey Shore's four House seats, watch the video at the top of the page.

The Ocean County section of the district is made up of Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Eagleswood, Harvey Cedars, Little Egg Harbor, Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom, part of Stafford, Surf City and Tuckerton.

NJ-11: POLITICO New Jersey: New GOP candidate emerges for Frelinghuysen seat with Essex and Passaic support

By Matt Friedman

February 21, 2018

A new, potentially formidable candidate has emerged in the Republican primary in the 11th Congressional District. Antony Ghee, a 47-year-old investment banker, lawyer and Army Reserve JAG officer from Totowa, announced Wednesday he's running for the seat being vacated by Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, a 23-year Republican incumbent who announced his retirement last month while facing the only competitive reelection race of his career.

"Do we nominate a career politician in an age when most people don't trust their government or the people serving, or do we seize this opportunity to do something bold and energize our party heading into the general election?" Ghee said in a statement. "Without question we must do the latter, which is why I am announcing my candidacy for Congress today and intend work very hard to earn your support in the June primary."

NC-09: Daily Journal: Pittenger faces competition in re-election bid

By William R. Toler

February 21, 2018

The race for the U.S. House of Representatives is heating up, but the sitting congressman has yet to enter. Five candidates from the three parties available on North Carolina's ballot have all filed for this year's election. However, Rep. Robert Pittenger, R-Charlotte, wasn't on the list as of 5 p.m. Tuesday. Two candidates from Pittenger's own Republican party — Mark Harris and Clarence Goins Jr. — are challenging the incumbent, who has been in Congress since 2013. Harris and Todd Johnson challenged Pittenger in the 2016 Republican primary. During that election, Johnson carried a majority of the rural areas, including his home county of Union.

NY-21: POLITICO New York: Dylan Ratigan declares for Congress, shakes up Stefanik race

By Jimmy Vielkind
February 21, 2018

Former MSNBC host Dylan Ratigan declared his candidacy for Congress on Wednesday, cannonballing into the wide, shallow pool of Democrats hoping to challenge Rep. Elise Stefanik in the northern reaches of New York state. The 45-year-old is the ninth Democrat to seek the nomination in the 12-county 21st Congressional District, which has been a safe Republican bastion — minus five years of Democratic representation by Bill Owens during the Obama administration — since the Civil War. Stefanik was elected in 2014.

Ratigan said he has long thought about running for Congress, but had trouble untangling himself from a business that encourages veterans to set up solar-powered hydroponic farms and was increasingly dismayed with the "carnival" atmosphere of current political discourse.

NY State of Politics: Tenney: Many Mass Murderers 'End Up Being Democrats'

By Nick Reisman
February 21, 2018

Republican Rep. Claudia Tenney in a radio interview on Wednesday suggested "many of the people" who commit mass killings are Democrats.

Tenney was interviewed Wednesday morning by Fred Dicker on his "Focus On The State Capitol" radio show, discussing the shooting at a Florida high school that killed 17 people. The shooting has re-ignited a nationwide over gun control and a push for stronger background checks of those who buy firearms.

In the interview, Tenney said it was unfair that legal gun owners would face the brunt of any effort to crack down on firearms.

PA-06: Washington Monthly (opinion): GOP Congressman Ryan Costello is really losing it

By Martin Longman
February 21, 2018

My congressman, Ryan Costello, is well-respected in my community. He's a local boy who did good. He knows he represents a district that voted for Obama once and for Hillary Clinton. He doesn't throw bombs and keeps away from right-wing media. He casts an occasional dissenting vote. He tries to sound reasonable about immigration policy. He opted out of attending Trump's convention in Cleveland because of concerns about Trump's behavior and rhetoric. It's all sensible behavior for someone who most definitely represents a swing district. His predecessor, Jim Gerlach, survived some rough election cycles using the same basic playbook.

But Costello has been acting weird lately. He was supposed to be at the softball practice where his colleague Steve Scalise was shot and almost killed, but he missed his ride. After that, he became less accessible. He refused to attend a town hall meeting in Phoenixville, offering the implausible explanation that the sponsors' inadequate security had created a death trap. Then he collapsed at the local gym when he read the headlines about it in the local newspaper.

TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat

By Tim Murphy
February 21, 2018

A surge in women candidates may be a big reason why.

The 2018 election officially began on Tuesday with the first day of early voting ahead of Texas' March 6th primaries. Evidently, a lot of people got the message. In Harris County, which includes Houston and is the state's largest population center, Republican turnout was 25-percent higher than the first day of early-voting in the 2014 primaries. That makes some sense—there's an expensive state house of representatives race in the county and an open Republican-leaning congressional district. But what's more surprising is the turnout jump on the Democratic side—a full 300 percent.

[TX-all: Austin American Statesman: Growth of Texas Democratic early voters so far outpaces Republicans](#)

By Julie Chang

February 21, 2018

In Texas' 30 most populous counties, 51 percent more Democrats voted in their primary on Tuesday than in 2014, compared to the 16 percent growth rate in voters in the Republican primary.

According to early voting numbers released by the Texas Secretary of State's office on Wednesday, 33 percent more people showed up to the polls on Tuesday than they did on the first day of early voting in 2014. A bit more Democrats voted in person than Republicans in their respective primaries — 28,475 compared to 22,774, respectively.

Across Central Texas, voter turnout trends were similar when comparing Tuesday's and 2014 first early voting day figures:

[VA-07: NPR: More Than Twice As Many Women Are Running For Congress In 2018 Compared With 2016](#)

By Danielle Kurtzleben

February 20, 2018

[...] Democratic women (even those who don't have a daughter running for Congress) are amped up for 2018. It's visible in Spanberger's volunteers, about two-thirds of whom are women, and in this race's candidates as well.

Spanberger is one of four Democrats, three women, along with one man, vying for that party's nomination in this district. And that miniwave in Virginia's 7th Congressional District is a microcosm of something happening nationwide. At latest count, 431 women were running for or were likely to run for the House nationwide — 339 Democrats and 92 Republicans. At this point in 2016, there were fewer than half that: 212. Likewise, 50 women are running for or likely to run for Senate, compared with 25 at this point in 2016. Many have not officially filed for office yet — filing deadlines have not occurred in many states. But thus far, this year is on track to break records.

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By Jeff Mason, Zachary Fagenson

February 22, 2018

Students galvanized by the deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school confronted lawmakers on Wednesday with demands to restrict sales of assault rifles, while President Donald Trump suggested arming teachers as a way to stop more U.S. rampages.

The unprecedented lobbying effort by groups of teenagers and parents at the White House and at the Florida statehouse in Tallahassee played out as fellow students staged classroom walkouts and rallies in cities across the country.

Trump held an emotional, hour-long meeting with students who survived the Florida shooting and a parent whose child did not. He said arming teachers and other school staff could help prevent future mass shootings, voicing support for an idea backed by the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby.

Washington Post: Marco Rubio and the NRA confronted by shooting survivors, grieving parents at tense town hall

By Marwa Eltagouri, Keith McMillan

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There appeared to be little room for nuance Wednesday evening at CNN's emotionally charged town hall, which brought survivors, lawmakers and a prominent Second Amendment advocate together for the first time since the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

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Little room for questioning whether raising the minimum age to purchase that gun could have stopped him. When Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) brought up a concept that would allow police to temporarily seize a gun-owner's weapons, Stoneman Douglas student Ryan Deitsch told him, "that feels like the first step of a 5k run."

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February 21, 2018

An anguished father mourning his 18-year-old daughter vented his anger and pleaded for safer schools.

A fear-stricken student who watched classmates die last week wept openly as he called for banning assault weapons.

A mother who lost her 6-year-old son in a school shooting just over five years ago warned that more parents would lose their children if President Trump did not act, adding, "Don't let that happen on your watch."

One by one at the White House on Wednesday afternoon, survivors of school shootings and family members of victims shared their stories and their calls to action. The extraordinary public exchange with the president gave voice to an intensely emotional debate over how to respond to the latest gun massacre in an American school.

Politico: The Frat House of Representatives

By John Bresnahan, Rachel

February 22, 2018

Crotch shots. Infidelity. Secret payoffs. Pants-less octogenarians. And the infamous "Bros Caucus."

Welcome to the Frat House of Representatives.

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Washington Post: For some Democrats running for Congress, a strategic navigation of gun issues

By Paul Kane

February 21, 2018

Democrats have found their latest dose of political adrenaline in the fight over tougher gun restrictions, appearing to have Republicans on the defensive following their slow-moving response to the massacre of 17 at a Florida high school on Feb. 14.

But there are also a fair number of Democrats running for Congress with mixed views on the issue, sounding quite different from those in the party who are angling for the 2020 presidential nomination.

The most noticeable example is Conor Lamb, a 33-year-old from outside Pittsburgh with a sterling résumé running in a special House election next month. Lamb served as a captain in the Marine Corps until 2013, when he went on to serve as a federal prosecutor focusing on opioid crimes.

[The Hill: Dems want gun control, but worry it could cost them midterms](#)

By Amie Parnes, Mike Lillis

February 22, 2018

Democrats mulling how to approach gun control on the campaign trail this year are weighing their tough history on the subject against the burning politics of the moment.

The killings of 17 people at a Florida high school has led to an outpouring of student protests and new energy for the gun control movement. Polls show almost unanimous support for an expansion of background checks.

But the issue is a delicate one for party leaders hoping to flip both chambers in this year's midterms by defeating Republicans in conservative-leaning districts where tougher gun laws can be radioactive.

As the issue continues to dominate the headlines, some Democrats back an understated approach, particularly with vulnerable Democrats like Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.) and Joe Manchin (W.Va.) up for reelection in red states.

[The Hill: Number of women running in midterms more than doubles from 2016 to 2018: report](#)

By Avery Anapol

February 21, 2018

More than twice as many women are running for Congress in the 2018 midterm elections as were running just two years ago.

At least 431 female candidates are running or are likely to run for the House, compared to 212 in February 2016, according to NPR. In Senate races, 50 women are running or are likely to run, compared to 25 in 2016.

The wave of female candidates has mostly affected the Democratic party, according to recent data. Out of the 431 women running for the House, only 92 are Republicans.

[Politico: Trump on course for clash with House GOP over gun control](#)

By Rachel Bade, Elana Schor

February 21, 2018

President Donald Trump's tentative embrace of a narrow background-checks bill is about to hit a towering hurdle: members of his own party.

The White House is signaling support for a bipartisan bill that would enhance reporting of violent criminals to the FBI's background-check database in order to stop them from buying firearms. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) is trying to round up support for it along with the White House — a formidable duo from a party that typically shuns any talk of stricter gun measures.

But House conservatives are unwilling to sign on, unless the measure is coupled with so-called "concealed-carry" legislation backed by the NRA. Combining the two ideas would have the net effect of loosening gun controls.

[Politico: Dems demand budget boost to shield midterms from Russian interference](#)

By Elana Schor

February 21, 2018

Congressional Democratic leaders on Wednesday called for more than \$300 million in new funding to help safeguard this November's elections against Russian interference. But they stopped short of courting any shutdown battles over the issue ahead of next month's must-pass government spending bill.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) outlined their bid for extra money for the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Election Assistance Commission in a letter to GOP leaders that made no mention of President Donald Trump.

But Democrats' request was clearly intended as a barb toward Trump, who has seemingly lashed out at every target besides Moscow in the days since special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 13 Russian nationals for an alleged systematic campaign to disrupt the 2016 election.

Bloomberg: Democrats Counter GOP Tax-Cut Pitch by Warning of Long-Term Pain

By John McCormick

February 21, 2018

As voters complete their tax returns this year, Kelly Mazeski and other Democratic candidates in high-income, high-tax congressional districts want them to be thinking about the possible pain ahead.

Republicans are leaning hard on the tax cuts that are boosting take-home pay now as a central theme in their campaigns for the November congressional elections. Mazeski is telling residents in the affluent Chicago suburbs, where she's seeking to unseat Republican Representative Peter Roskam, that what the GOP is offering is just a sugar high.

She's reminding voters that when they file their 2018 returns next year, they'll be hit by a cap on state and local taxes, known as SALT, and may end up owing more long after the election is over.

Roll Call: House Oversight Probes Scott Pruitt's Travel Expenses

By Elvina Nawaguna

February 22, 2018

As questions about the official travel habits of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt mount, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee is demanding documents and other information on his first-class flights, as it looks into whether federal laws were broken.

Pruitt has for several months been under fire for incurring high travel costs at taxpayer expense. After recent news reports of Pruitt's use of expensive first-class flights and stays at luxury hotels, an EPA spokesman said the administrator had been given a "blanket waiver" to fly first class for security reasons.

Although the EPA spokesman has since walked back the "blanket waiver" assertion and said waivers were requested for every first- or business-class trip, lawmakers are seeking more answers.

CA-10/48: LA Times: Emily's List announces two more endorsements in California House races

By Christine Mai-Duc

February 21, 2018

Abortion-rights group Emily's List has thrown its weight behind two more Democrats challenging GOP incumbents in California.

The group announced Wednesday that it's endorsing Rachel Payne's candidacy against Rep. Dana Rohrabacher in Orange County, and Virginia Madueño in the race to unseat Rep. Jeff Denham in the Central Valley.

In a statement announcing the endorsements, President Stephanie Schriock highlighted Madueño's background as a small town mayor and business owner, and Payne's leadership in the tech industry.

Of the seven districts where Emily's List previously put Republican incumbents "on notice," the group, which focuses on electing pro-choice Democratic women, has endorsed six challengers.

CA-25: Signal: Stern endorsement sets stage for convention battle

By Andrew Clark

February 20, 2018

A state senator representing the southwestern portion of Santa Clarita could make waves in the 25th Congressional District primary race after he endorsed Katie Hill, the executive director for nonprofit People Assisting The Homeless, days before the Democratic state convention in San Diego.

Sen. Henry Stern, D-Calabasas, endorsed Hill Tuesday, the first official that represents part of the district to back Hill in the race. During the 2016 election, Stern campaigned with attorney Bryan Caforio, who's also running for the seat currently held by Congressman Steve Knight.

"As the senator for the Simi, Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys in the 25th, it's clear that Katie is of, by, and for the people of this district. She's unapologetic about her values and doesn't shy away from tough issues," Stern said in a statement. "Congress needs change—Congress needs Katie Hill."

[CA-25/39/45/48: LA Times: Group working to elect more scientists to Congress will spend \\$1 million on Los Angeles TV ads](#)

By Sarah D. Wire

February 21, 2018

A political nonprofit working to elect scientists to Congress announced Wednesday it has reserved just over \$1 million in broadcast television air time in the Los Angeles in the two weeks leading up to June's primary.

314 Action, a 501(c)(4) social welfare group, has endorsed a trio of Democratic House candidates who are running in three different crowded and competitive Orange County races to win seats currently held by Republicans.

The group is planning on spending between \$5 million and \$7 million to support its endorsed candidates during the midterm election, said executive director Joshua Morrow.

[CA-48: OC Weekly: Protest Targets Walters, Rohrabacher, Trump and Oil Drilling Off Orange County Coast](#)

By Matt Coker

February 21, 2018

At high noon Thursday, demonstrators plan to gather in Laguna Beach to call attention to their opposition to oil drilling off the Orange County coast and three Washington, D.C., politicians: U.S. Representatives Mimi Walters (R-Irvine), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach) and President Donald Trump.

The crowd organized by the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Greenpeace USA, OFA-California, HB Huddle, Resist Here, Women for American Values and Ethics (WAVE), Mothers Out Front Tustin, Indivisible OC 45, Together We Will Orange County and SoCal Healthcare Coalition will gather in the coastal neighborhood where Walters lives but is actually within the 45th Congressional District represented by Rohrabacher.

He has come out in support of Trump's plan to restart oil drilling off coasts in the United States that are not Florida's (because of a promise made to that state's Republican governor, Rick Scott).

[CA-49: Cosmopolitan: Sara Jacobs Could Be the Youngest Congresswoman Ever](#)

By Rebecca Nelson

February 21, 2018

It's 5:30 p.m. at a trendy brewpub in Encinitas, California, with 25 beers on draft, and Sara Jacobs can't have any of them.

Jacobs, 29, a Democratic candidate for Congress in California, has invited a handful of local community college students to tell her what's on their mind: student debt, mental health services, a lack of basic health care. They'll do it over drinks, because even in 2018, the worn adage persists that a candidate should be relatable enough to have a beer with. Before the waitress pours the beer, though, she asks to see everyone's license. That's when it hits her: Jacobs doesn't have her ID.

Her campaign manager calls her political director, who walks in a few minutes later with Jacobs's wallet, and inside, her California state ID. The waitress studies it and then pours her a sorely-needed glass. You do have to be at least 25 to run for Congress, Jacobs reminds us.

[CO-06: Washington Post: GOP congressman Coffman booted at gun control town hall](#)

By Mike DeBonis

February 21, 2018

Patti Seno registered for Rep. Mike Coffman's town hall meeting expecting to ask him about health care. The deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school changed all that.

In a high school auditorium here, amid a suburban landscape scarred by the acts of mass gun violence in the nearby towns of Littleton and Aurora, Seno delivered a stern message to the five-term Republican, whose response, at times, was met with jeers.

"It took children to shake me from my comfort zone to come forward to say: Enough is enough," said the 53-year-old benefits administrator, referring to the students who have spoken out after a troubled ex-student, the alleged shooter, killed 17 people inside a Florida high school last week.

FL-all: NYT: Florida Republicans Face Mounting Pressure to Act on Gun Control

By Alex Burns

February 21, 2018

Representative Stephanie Murphy, a Democrat who represents the Orlando area, said voters in her largely suburban district had reached a breaking point on the gun issue. Ms. Murphy, who has introduced legislation to authorize the Department of Health and Human Services to study gun violence, said the government had failed to keep pace with regular people's concerns about mass killings.

"People are angry and they're outraged and they're motivated," said Ms. Murphy, who defeated an N.R.A.-backed Republican in 2016. "We were affected by Pulse less than two years ago, and here's another mass shooting."

FL-18/26: Florida Politics: Progressives target Brian Mast, Carlos Curbelo on immigration

By Mitch Perry

February 21, 2018

An immigration advocacy group on Tuesday launched a series of digital ads targeting Republican U.S. Reps. Brian Mast and Carlos Curbelo, as well as their GOP colleagues, for their role in failing to protect "Dreamers."

iAmerica Action announced it will spend \$250,000 in 27 House districts on the ads, many of which have large Latino populations.

Mast represents Florida's 18th Congressional District in Palm Beach County, while Curbelo represents Miami down to Key West as part of representing Florida's 26th Congressional district.

Both seats are considered targets for a potential Democratic flip in the 2018 election cycle.

IA-01: Associated Press: Iowa Congressman Failed to Disclose Internet Company

By Ryan Foley

February 21, 2018

— A congressman from Iowa violated House ethics rules by failing to disclose a new company that he owns, a mysterious outfit that uses one of his federal staffers in a false testimonial for its services, an Associated Press review shows.

Rep. Rod Blum was one of two directors of the Tin Moon Corp. when the internet marketing company was incorporated in May 2016, as the Republican was serving his first term, a business filing shows. Among other services, Tin Moon promises to help companies cited for federal food and drug safety violations bury their Food and Drug Administration warning letters below positive internet search results.

Tin Moon's website had listed Blum as its CEO and featured an official photo of Blum wearing his congressional pin in front of an American flag. The company removed the photo and changed Blum's title to "majority shareholder" Tuesday after the AP raised questions about House ethics rules. Tin Moon is based in the same Dubuque office as a construction software company he owns, called Digital Canal.

NJ-02: Asbury Park Press: House Democrats embrace pro-gun candidate Jeff Van Drew for Jersey Shore seat

By Bob Jordan

February 21, 2018

For a district that covers part of Ocean County, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says it will start giving fundraising and organizational support to a midterm candidate who voted against gay marriage and gun control measures backed by fellow Democrats.

Democratic state Sen. Jeff Van Drew is among four potential contenders in the party's primary election for the House seat held by the retiring Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-N.J., in New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. For more on the Jersey Shore's four House seats, watch the video at the top of the page.

The Ocean County section of the district is made up of Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Eagleswood, Harvey Cedars, Little Egg Harbor, Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom, part of Stafford, Surf City and Tuckerton.

NJ-11: POLITICO New Jersey: New GOP candidate emerges for Frelinghuysen seat with Essex and Passaic support

By Matt Friedman

February 21, 2018

A new, potentially formidable candidate has emerged in the Republican primary in the 11th Congressional District. Antony Ghee, a 47-year-old investment banker, lawyer and Army Reserve JAG officer from Totowa, announced Wednesday he's running for the seat being vacated by Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, a 23-year Republican incumbent who announced his retirement last month while facing the only competitive reelection race of his career.

"Do we nominate a career politician in an age when most people don't trust their government or the people serving, or do we seize this opportunity to do something bold and energize our party heading into the general election?" Ghee said in a statement. "Without question we must do the latter, which is why I am announcing my candidacy for Congress today and intend work very hard to earn your support in the June primary."

NC-09: Daily Journal: Pittenger faces competition in re-election bid

By William R. Toler

February 21, 2018

The race for the U.S. House of Representatives is heating up, but the sitting congressman has yet to enter. Five candidates from the three parties available on North Carolina's ballot have all filed for this year's election. However, Rep. Robert Pittenger, R-Charlotte, wasn't on the list as of 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Two candidates from Pittenger's own Republican party — Mark Harris and Clarence Goins Jr. — are challenging the incumbent, who has been in Congress since 2013.

Harris and Todd Johnson challenged Pittenger in the 2016 Republican primary. During that election, Johnson carried a majority of the rural areas, including his home county of Union.

NY-21: POLITICO New York: Dylan Ratigan declares for Congress, shakes up Stefanik race

By Jimmy Vielkind

February 21, 2018

Former MSNBC host Dylan Ratigan declared his candidacy for Congress on Wednesday, cannonballing into the wide, shallow pool of Democrats hoping to challenge Rep. Elise Stefanik in the northern reaches of New York state. The 45-year-old is the ninth Democrat to seek the nomination in the 12-county 21st Congressional District, which has been a safe Republican bastion — minus five years of Democratic representation by Bill Owens during the Obama administration — since the Civil War. Stefanik was elected in 2014.

Ratigan said he has long thought about running for Congress, but had trouble untangling himself from a business that encourages veterans to set up solar-powered hydroponic farms and was increasingly dismayed with the "carnival" atmosphere of current political discourse.

NY State of Politics: Tenney: Many Mass Murderers 'End Up Being Democrats'

By Nick Reisman

February 21, 2018

Republican Rep. Claudia Tenney in a radio interview on Wednesday suggested "many of the people" who commit mass killings are Democrats.

Tenney was interviewed Wednesday morning by Fred Dicker on his "Focus On The State Capitol" radio show, discussing the shooting at a Florida high school that killed 17 people. The shooting has re-ignited a nationwide conversation over gun control and a push for stronger background checks of those who buy firearms.

In the interview, Tenney said it was unfair that legal gun owners would face the brunt of any effort to crack down on firearms.

PA-06: Washington Monthly (opinion): GOP Congressman Ryan Costello is really losing it

By Martin Longman

February 21, 2018

My congressman, Ryan Costello, is well-respected in my community. He's a local boy who did good. He knows he represents a district that voted for Obama once and for Hillary Clinton. He doesn't throw bombs and keeps away from right-wing media. He casts an occasional dissenting vote. He tries to sound reasonable about immigration policy. He opted out of attending Trump's convention in Cleveland because of concerns about Trump's behavior and rhetoric. It's all sensible behavior for someone who most definitely represents a swing district. His predecessor, Jim Gerlach, survived some rough election cycles using the same basic playbook.

But Costello has been acting weird lately. He was supposed to be at the softball practice where his colleague Steve Scalise was shot and almost killed, but he missed his ride. After that, he became less accessible. He refused to attend a town hall meeting in Phoenixville, offering the implausible explanation that the sponsors' inadequate security had created a death trap. Then he collapsed at the local gym when he read the headlines about it in the local newspaper.

TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat

By Tim Murphy

February 21, 2018

A surge in women candidates may be a big reason why.

The 2018 election officially began on Tuesday with the first day of early voting ahead of Texas' March 6th primaries. Evidently, a lot of people got the message. In Harris County, which includes Houston and is the state's largest population center, Republican turnout was 25-percent higher than the first day of early-voting in the 2014 primaries. That makes some sense—there's an expensive state house of representatives race in the county and an open Republican-leaning congressional district. But what's more surprising is the turnout jump on the Democratic side—a full 300 percent.

TX-all: Austin American Statesman: Growth of Texas Democratic early voters so far outpaces Republicans

By Julie Chang

February 21, 2018

In Texas' 30 most populous counties, 51 percent more Democrats voted in their primary on Tuesday than in 2014, compared to the 16 percent growth rate in voters in the Republican primary.

According to early voting numbers released by the Texas Secretary of State's office on Wednesday, 33 percent more people showed up to the polls on Tuesday than they did on the first day of early voting in 2014. A bit more Democrats voted in person than Republicans in their respective primaries — 28,475 compared to 22,774, respectively.

Across Central Texas, voter turnout trends were similar when comparing Tuesday's and 2014 first early voting day figures:

VA-07: NPR: More Than Twice As Many Women Are Running For Congress In 2018 Compared With 2016

By Danielle Kurtzleben

February 20, 2018

[...] Democratic women (even those who don't have a daughter running for Congress) are amped up for 2018. It's visible in Spanberger's volunteers, about two-thirds of whom are women, and in this race's candidates as well.

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By Marwa Eltagouri, Keith McMillan

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By Paul Kane

February 21, 2018

Democrats have found their latest dose of political adrenaline in the fight over tougher gun restrictions, appearing to have Republicans on the defensive following their slow-moving response to the massacre of 17 at a Florida high school on Feb. 14.

But there are also a fair number of Democrats running for Congress with mixed views on the issue, sounding quite different from those in the party who are angling for the 2020 presidential nomination.

The most noticeable example is Conor Lamb, a 33-year-old from outside Pittsburgh with a sterling résumé running in a special House election next month. Lamb served as a captain in the Marine Corps until 2013, when he went on to serve as a federal prosecutor focusing on opioid crimes.

The Hill: Number of women running in midterms more than doubles from 2016 to 2018: report

By Avery Anapol

February 21, 2018

More than twice as many women are running for Congress in the 2018 midterm elections as were running just two years ago.

At least 431 female candidates are running or are likely to run for the House, compared to 212 in February 2016, according to NPR. In Senate races, 50 women are running or are likely to run, compared to 25 in 2016.

The wave of female candidates has mostly affected the Democratic party, according to recent data. Out of the 431 women running for the House, only 92 are Republicans.

Politico: Trump on course for clash with House GOP over gun control

By Rachel Bade, Elana Schor

February 21, 2018

President Donald Trump's tentative embrace of a narrow background-checks bill is about to hit a towering hurdle: members of his own party.

The White House is signaling support for a bipartisan bill that would enhance reporting of violent criminals to the FBI's background-check database in order to stop them from buying firearms. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) is trying to round up support for it along with the White House — a formidable duo from a party that typically shuns any talk of stricter gun measures.

But House conservatives are unwilling to sign on, unless the measure is coupled with so-called "concealed-carry" legislation backed by the NRA. Combining the two ideas would have the net effect of loosening gun controls.

Politico: Dems demand budget boost to shield midterms from Russian interference

By Elana Schor

February 21, 2018

Congressional Democratic leaders on Wednesday called for more than \$300 million in new funding to help safeguard this November's elections against Russian interference. But they stopped short of courting any shutdown battles over the issue ahead of next month's must-pass government spending bill.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) outlined their bid for extra money for the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Election Assistance Commission in a letter to GOP leaders that made no mention of President Donald Trump.

But Democrats' request was clearly intended as a barb toward Trump, who has seemingly lashed out at every target besides Moscow in the days since special counsel Robert Mueller indicted 13 Russian nationals for an alleged systematic campaign to disrupt the 2016 election.

Bloomberg: Democrats Counter GOP Tax-Cut Pitch by Warning of Long-Term Pain

By John McCormick

February 21, 2018

As voters complete their tax returns this year, Kelly Mazeski and other Democratic candidates in high-income, high-tax congressional districts want them to be thinking about the possible pain ahead.

Republicans are leaning hard on the tax cuts that are boosting take-home pay now as a central theme in their campaigns for the November congressional elections. Mazeski is telling residents in the affluent Chicago suburbs, where she's seeking to unseat Republican Representative Peter Roskam, that what the GOP is offering is just a sugar high.

She's reminding voters that when they file their 2018 returns next year, they'll be hit by a cap on state and local taxes, known as SALT, and may end up owing more long after the election is over.

CA-10/48: LA Times: Emily's List announces two more endorsements in California House races

By Christine Mai-Duc

February 21, 2018

Abortion-rights group Emily's List has thrown its weight behind two more Democrats challenging GOP incumbents in California.

The group announced Wednesday that it's endorsing Rachel Payne's candidacy against Rep. Dana Rohrabacher in Orange County, and Virginia Madueño in the race to unseat Rep. Jeff Denham in the Central Valley.

In a statement announcing the endorsements, President Stephanie Schriock highlighted Madueño's background as a small town mayor and business owner, and Payne's leadership in the tech industry.

Of the seven districts where Emily's List previously put Republican incumbents "on notice," the group, which focuses on electing pro-choice Democratic women, has endorsed six challengers.

CA-25: Signal: Stern endorsement sets stage for convention battle

By Andrew Clark

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"As the senator for the Simi, Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys in the 25th, it's clear that Katie is of, by, and for the people of this district. She's unapologetic about her values and doesn't shy away from tough issues," Stern said in a statement. "Congress needs change—Congress needs Katie Hill."

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CA-48: OC Weekly: Protest Targets Walters, Rohrabacher, Trump and Oil Drilling Off Orange County Coast

By Matt Coker

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At high noon Thursday, demonstrators plan to gather in Laguna Beach to call attention to their opposition to oil drilling off the Orange County coast and three Washington, D.C., politicians: U.S. Representatives Mimi Walters (R-Irvine), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach) and President Donald Trump.

The crowd organized by the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Greenpeace USA, OFA-California, HB Huddle, Resist Here, Women for American Values and Ethics (WAVE), Mothers Out Front Tustin, Indivisible OC 45, Together We Will Orange County and SoCal Healthcare Coalition will gather in the coastal neighborhood where Walters lives but is actually within the 45th Congressional District represented by Rohrabacher.

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Her campaign manager calls her political director, who walks in a few minutes later with Jacobs's wallet, and inside, her California state ID. The waitress studies it and then pours her a sorely-needed glass. You do have to be at least 25 to run for Congress, Jacobs reminds us.

CO-06: Washington Post: GOP congressman Coffman booed at gun control town hall

By Mike DeBonis

February 21, 2018

Patti Seno registered for Rep. Mike Coffman's town hall meeting expecting to ask him about health care. The deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school changed all that.

In a high school auditorium here, amid a suburban landscape scarred by the acts of mass gun violence in the nearby towns of Littleton and Aurora, Seno delivered a stern message to the five-term Republican, whose response, at times, was met with jeers.

"It took children to shake me from my comfort zone to come forward to say: Enough is enough," said the 53-year-old benefits administrator, referring to the students who have spoken out after a troubled ex-student, the alleged shooter, killed 17 people inside a Florida high school last week.

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Tin Moon's website had listed Blum as its CEO and featured an official photo of Blum wearing his congressional pin in front of an American flag. The company removed the photo and changed Blum's title to "majority shareholder" Tuesday after the AP raised questions about House ethics rules. Tin Moon is based in the same Dubuque office as a construction software company he owns, called Digital Canal.

NJ-02: Asbury Park Press: House Democrats embrace pro-gun candidate Jeff Van Drew for Jersey Shore seat

By Bob Jordan

February 21, 2018

For a district that covers part of Ocean County, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says it will start giving fundraising and organizational support to a midterm candidate who voted against gay marriage and gun control measures backed by fellow Democrats.

Democratic state Sen. Jeff Van Drew is among four potential contenders in the party's primary election for the House seat held by the retiring Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-N.J., in New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. For more on the Jersey Shore's four House seats, watch the video at the top of the page.

The Ocean County section of the district is made up of Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Eagleswood, Harvey Cedars, Little Egg Harbor, Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom, part of Stafford, Surf City and Tuckerton.

NJ-11: POLITICO New Jersey: New GOP candidate emerges for Frelinghuysen seat with Essex and Passaic support

By Matt Friedman

February 21, 2018

A new, potentially formidable candidate has emerged in the Republican primary in the 11th Congressional District. Antony Ghee, a 47-year-old investment banker, lawyer and Army Reserve JAG officer from Totowa, announced Wednesday he's running for the seat being vacated by Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, a 23-year Republican incumbent who announced his retirement last month while facing the only competitive reelection race of his career.

"Do we nominate a career politician in an age when most people don't trust their government or the people serving, or do we seize this opportunity to do something bold and energize our party heading into the general election?" Ghee said in a statement. "Without question we must do the latter, which is why I am announcing my candidacy for Congress today and intend work very hard to earn your support in the June primary."

NC-09: Daily Journal: Pittenger faces competition in re-election bid

By William R. Toler

February 21, 2018

The race for the U.S. House of Representatives is heating up, but the sitting congressman has yet to enter.

Five candidates from the three parties available on North Carolina's ballot have all filed for this year's election. However, Rep. Robert Pittenger, R-Charlotte, wasn't on the list as of 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Two candidates from Pittenger's own Republican party — Mark Harris and Clarence Goins Jr. — are challenging the incumbent, who has been in Congress since 2013.

Harris and Todd Johnson challenged Pittenger in the 2016 Republican primary. During that election, Johnson carried a majority of the rural areas, including his home county of Union.

NY-21: POLITICO New York: Dylan Ratigan declares for Congress, shakes up Stefanik race

By Jimmy Vielkind

February 21, 2018

Former MSNBC host Dylan Ratigan declared his candidacy for Congress on Wednesday, cannonballing into the wide, shallow pool of Democrats hoping to challenge Republian Rep. Elise Stefanik in the northern reaches of New York state. The 45-year-old is the ninth Democrat to seek the nomination in the 12-county 21st Congressional District, which has been a safe Republican bastion — minus five years of Democratic representation by Bill Owens during the Obama administration — since the Civil War. Stefanik was elected in 2014.

Ratigan said he has long thought about running for Congress, but had trouble untangling himself from a business that encourages veterans to set up solar-powered hydroponic farms and was increasingly dismayed with the "carnival" atmosphere of current political discourse.

NY State of Politics: Tenney: Many Mass Murderers 'End Up Being Democrats'

By Nick Reisman

February 21, 2018

Republican Rep. Claudia Tenney in a radio interview on Wednesday suggested "many of the people" who commit mass killings are Democrats.

Tenney was interview Wednesday morning by Fred Dicker on his "Focus On The State Capitol" radio show, discussing the shooting at a Florida high school that killed 17 people. The shooting has re-ignited a nationwide over gun control and a push for stronger background checks of those who buy firearms.

In the interview, Tenney said it was unfair that legal gun owners would face the brunt of any effort to crack down on firearms.

PA-06: Washington Monthly (opinion): GOP Congressman Ryan Costello is really losing it

By Martin Longman

February 21, 2018

My congressman, Ryan Costello, is well-respected in my community. He's a local boy who did good. He knows he represents a district that voted for Obama once and for Hillary Clinton. He doesn't throw bombs and keeps away from right-wing media. He casts an occasional dissenting vote. He tries to sound reasonable about immigration policy. He opted out of attending Trump's convention in Cleveland because of concerns about Trump's behavior and rhetoric. It's all sensible behavior for someone who most definitely represents a swing district. His predecessor, Jim Gerlach, survived some rough election cycles using the same basic playbook.

But Costello has been acting weird lately. He was supposed to be at the softball practice where his colleague Steve Scalise was shot and almost killed, but he missed his ride. After that, he became less accessible. He refused to attend a town hall meeting in Phoenixville, offering the implausible explanation that the sponsors' inadequate security had created a death trap. Then he collapsed at the local gym when he read the headlines about it in the local newspaper.

TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat

By Tim Murphy

February 21, 2018

A surge in women candidates may be a big reason why.

The 2018 election officially began on Tuesday with the first day of early voting ahead of Texas' March 6th primaries. Evidently, a lot of people got the message. In Harris County, which includes Houston and is the state's largest population center, Republican turnout was 25-percent higher than the first day of early-voting in the 2014 primaries. That makes some sense—there's an expensive state house of representatives race in the county and an open Republican-leaning congressional district. But what's more surprising is the turnout jump on the Democratic side—a full 300 percent.

TX-all: Austin American Statesman: Growth of Texas Democratic early voters so far outpaces Republicans

By Julie Chang
February 21, 2018

In Texas' 30 most populous counties, 51 percent more Democrats voted in their primary on Tuesday than in 2014, compared to the 16 percent growth rate in voters in the Republican primary. According to early voting numbers released by the Texas Secretary of State's office on Wednesday, 33 percent more people showed up to the polls on Tuesday than they did on the first day of early voting in 2014. A bit more Democrats voted in person than Republicans in their respective primaries — 28,475 compared to 22,774, respectively. Across Central Texas, voter turnout trends were similar when comparing Tuesday's and 2014 first early voting day figures:

[VA-07; NPR: More Than Twice As Many Women Are Running For Congress In 2018 Compared With 2016](#)

By Danielle Kurtzleben
February 20, 2018

[...] Democratic women (even those who don't have a daughter running for Congress) are amped up for 2018. It's visible in Spanberger's volunteers, about two-thirds of whom are women, and in this race's candidates as well. Spanberger is one of four Democrats, three women, along with one man, vying for that party's nomination in this district. And that miniwave in Virginia's 7th Congressional District is a microcosm of something happening nationwide. At latest count, 431 women were running for or were likely to run for the House nationwide — 339 Democrats and 92 Republicans. At this point in 2016, there were fewer than half that: 212. Likewise, 50 women are running for or likely to run for Senate, compared with 25 at this point in 2016. Many have not officially filed for office yet — filing deadlines have not occurred in many states. But thus far, this year is on track to break records.

Sent: 2/22/2018 6:09:57 AM

DCCC Press Clips 2/22/18

Driving the Day

- Reuters: U.S. students protest over gun laws, Trump considers arming teachers
- Washington Post: Marco Rubio and the NRA confronted by shooting survivors, grieving parents at tense town hall
- NYT: Parents and Students Plead With Trump: 'How Many Children Have to Get Shot?'

Congressional Coverage

- Politico: The Frat House of Representatives
- Washington Post: For some Democrats running for Congress, a strategic navigation of gun issues
- Politico: Dems demand budget boost to shield midterms from Russian interference
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District by District

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Reuters: U.S. students protest over gun laws, Trump considers arming teachers

By Jeff Mason, Zachary Fagenson

February 22, 2018

Students galvanized by the deadly mass shooting at a Florida high school confronted lawmakers on Wednesday with demands to restrict sales of assault rifles, while President Donald Trump suggested arming teachers as a way to stop more U.S. rampages.

The unprecedented lobbying effort by groups of teenagers and parents at the White House and at the Florida statehouse in Tallahassee played out as fellow students staged classroom walkouts and rallies in cities across the country.

Trump held an emotional, hour-long meeting with students who survived the Florida shooting and a parent whose child did not. He said arming teachers and other school staff could help prevent future mass shootings, voicing support for an idea backed by the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby.

Washington Post: Marco Rubio and the NRA confronted by shooting survivors, grieving parents at tense town hall

By Marwa Eltagouri, Keith McMillan

February 22, 2018

There appeared to be little room for nuance Wednesday evening at CNN's emotionally charged town hall, which brought survivors, lawmakers and a prominent Second Amendment advocate together for the first time since the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

Little room for discussing whether a ban on "bump stock" devices — which allow semiautomatic guns to fire faster — could have prevented a 19-year-old from entering the school last week and killing 17 people and wounding dozens more with an AR-15 rifle.

Little room for questioning whether raising the minimum age to purchase that gun could have stopped him.

When Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) brought up a concept that would allow police to temporarily seize a gun-owner's weapons, Stoneman Douglas student Ryan Deitsch told him, "that feels like the first step of a 5k run."

NYT: Parents and Students Plead With Trump: 'How Many Children Have to Get Shot?'

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

February 21, 2018

An anguished father mourning his 18-year-old daughter vented his anger and pleaded for safer schools.

A fear-stricken student who watched classmates die last week wept openly as he called for banning assault weapons.

A mother who lost her 6-year-old son in a school shooting just over five years ago warned that more parents would lose their children if President Trump did not act, adding, "Don't let that happen on your watch."

One by one at the White House on Wednesday afternoon, survivors of school shootings and family members of victims shared their stories and their calls to action. The extraordinary public exchange with the president gave voice to an intensely emotional debate over how to respond to the latest gun massacre in an American school.

Politico: The Frat House of Representatives

By John Bresnahan, Rachel

February 22, 2018

Crotch shots. Infidelity. Secret payoffs. Pants-less octogenarians. And the infamous "Bros Caucus."

Welcome to the Frat House of Representatives.

The past year in Congress has been a lowlight reel of nonstop unethical — and, in some cases, potentially illegal — behavior. Three House members resigned over alleged misconduct. Four others announced they won't seek reelection, an option they took to head off party leaders forcing them out.

Just last week, POLITICO reported that Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio) is threatening to depose Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) in his divorce case. Turner wants to know about Issa's relationship with Turner's estranged wife, though Issa has denied any improper behavior.

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By Bob Jordan

February 21, 2018

For a district that covers part of Ocean County, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says it will start giving fundraising and organizational support to a midterm candidate who voted against gay marriage and gun control measures backed by fellow Democrats.

Democratic state Sen. Jeff Van Drew is among four potential contenders in the party's primary election for the House seat held by the retiring Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-N.J., in New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. For more on the Jersey Shore's four House seats, watch the video at the top of the page.

The Ocean County section of the district is made up of Barneget Light, Beach Haven, Eagleswood, Harvey Cedars, Little Egg Harbor, Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom, part of Stafford, Surf City and Tuckerton.

NJ-11: POLITICO New Jersey: New GOP candidate emerges for Frelinghuysen seat with Essex and Passaic support

By Matt Friedman

February 21, 2018

A new, potentially formidable candidate has emerged in the Republican primary in the 11th Congressional District. Antony Ghee, a 47-year-old investment banker, lawyer and Army Reserve JAG officer from Totowa, announced Wednesday he's running for the seat being vacated by Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, a 23-year Republican incumbent who announced his retirement last month while facing the only competitive reelection race of his career.

"Do we nominate a career politician in an age when most people don't trust their government or the people serving, or do we seize this opportunity to do something bold and energize our party heading into the general election?" Ghee said

in a statement. "Without question we must do the latter, which is why I am announcing my candidacy for Congress today and intend work very hard to earn your support in the June primary."

NC-09: Daily Journal: Pittenger faces competition in re-election bid

By William R. Toler
February 21, 2018

The race for the U.S. House of Representatives is heating up, but the sitting congressman has yet to enter. Five candidates from the three parties available on North Carolina's ballot have all filed for this year's election. However, Rep. Robert Pittenger, R-Charlotte, wasn't on the list as of 5 p.m. Tuesday. Two candidates from Pittenger's own Republican party — Mark Harris and Clarence Goins Jr. — are challenging the incumbent, who has been in Congress since 2013. Harris and Todd Johnson challenged Pittenger in the 2016 Republican primary. During that election, Johnson carried a majority of the rural areas, including his home county of Union.

NY-21: POLITICO New York: Dylan Ratigan declares for Congress, shakes up Stefanik race

By Jimmy Vielkind
February 21, 2018

Former MSNBC host Dylan Ratigan declared his candidacy for Congress on Wednesday, cannonballing into the wide, shallow pool of Democrats hoping to challenge Rep. Elise Stefanik in the northern reaches of New York state. The 45-year-old is the ninth Democrat to seek the nomination in the 12-county 21st Congressional District, which has been a safe Republican bastion — minus five years of Democratic representation by Bill Owens during the Obama administration — since the Civil War. Stefanik was elected in 2014.

Ratigan said he has long thought about running for Congress, but had trouble untangling himself from a business that encourages veterans to set up solar-powered hydroponic farms and was increasingly dismayed with the "carnival" atmosphere of current political discourse.

NY State of Politics: Tenney: Many Mass Murderers 'End Up Being Democrats'

By Nick Reisman
February 21, 2018

Republican Rep. Claudia Tenney in a radio interview on Wednesday suggested "many of the people" who commit mass killings are Democrats.

Tenney was interviewed Wednesday morning by Fred Dicker on his "Focus On The State Capitol" radio show, discussing the shooting at a Florida high school that killed 17 people. The shooting has re-ignited a nationwide over gun control and a push for stronger background checks of those who buy firearms.

In the interview, Tenney said it was unfair that legal gun owners would face the brunt of any effort to crack down on firearms.

PA-06: Washington Monthly (opinion): GOP Congressman Ryan Costello is really losing it

By Martin Longman
February 21, 2018

My congressman, Ryan Costello, is well-respected in my community. He's a local boy who did good. He knows he represents a district that voted for Obama once and for Hillary Clinton. He doesn't throw bombs and keeps away from right-wing media. He casts an occasional dissenting vote. He tries to sound reasonable about immigration policy. He opted out of attending Trump's convention in Cleveland because of concerns about Trump's behavior and rhetoric. It's all sensible behavior for someone who most definitely represents a swing district. His predecessor, Jim Gerlach, survived some rough election cycles using the same basic playbook.

But Costello has been acting weird lately. He was supposed to be at the softball practice where his colleague Steve Scalise was shot and almost killed, but he missed his ride. After that, he became less accessible. He refused to attend a

town hall meeting in Phoenixville, offering the implausible explanation that the sponsors' inadequate security had created a death trap. Then he collapsed at the local gym when he read the headlines about it in the local newspaper.

[TX-all: Mother Jones: The 2018 Election Started Tuesday With One Jaw-Dropping Stat](#)

By Tim Murphy

February 21, 2018

A surge in women candidates may be a big reason why.

The 2018 election officially began on Tuesday with the first day of early voting ahead of Texas' March 6th primaries. Evidently, a lot of people got the message. In Harris County, which includes Houston and is the state's largest population center, Republican turnout was 25-percent higher than the first day of early-voting in the 2014 primaries. That makes some sense—there's an expensive state house of representatives race in the county and an open Republican-leaning congressional district. But what's more surprising is the turnout jump on the Democratic side—a full 300 percent.

[TX-all: Austin American Statesman: Growth of Texas Democratic early voters so far outpaces Republicans](#)

By Julie Chang

February 21, 2018

In Texas' 30 most populous counties, 51 percent more Democrats voted in their primary on Tuesday than in 2014, compared to the 16 percent growth rate in voters in the Republican primary.

According to early voting numbers released by the Texas Secretary of State's office on Wednesday, 33 percent more people showed up to the polls on Tuesday than they did on the first day of early voting in 2014. A bit more Democrats voted in person than Republicans in their respective primaries — 28,475 compared to 22,774, respectively.

Across Central Texas, voter turnout trends were similar when comparing Tuesday's and 2014 first early voting day figures:

[VA-07: NPR: More Than Twice As Many Women Are Running For Congress In 2018 Compared With 2016](#)

By Danielle Kurtzleben

February 20, 2018

[...] Democratic women (even those who don't have a daughter running for Congress) are amped up for 2018. It's visible in Spanberger's volunteers, about two-thirds of whom are women, and in this race's candidates as well.

Spanberger is one of four Democrats, three women, along with one man, vying for that party's nomination in this district. And that miniwave in Virginia's 7th Congressional District is a microcosm of something happening nationwide. At latest count, 431 women were running for or were likely to run for the House nationwide — 339 Democrats and 92 Republicans. At this point in 2016, there were fewer than half that: 212. Likewise, 50 women are running for or likely to run for Senate, compared with 25 at this point in 2016. Many have not officially filed for office yet — filing deadlines have not occurred in many states. But thus far, this year is on track to break records.

From: Rebecca Drago [drago@dccc.org]
Sent: 2/23/2018 6:09:08 AM
To: Comm - National [Comm-National@dccc.org]
Subject: Campaign Pro's Morning Score: Money race in Texas primaries — Top governor's races of 2018 — Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens indicted

CASH RACE — Pre-primary FEC reports out in Texas primaries: We're less than two weeks away from the first primary of 2018, and we've got a look inside the final stretch from a money perspective. Remember: If no primary candidate reaches more than 50 percent, the top two vote-getters will head to a run-off, scheduled for May 22.

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— **TX-16:** Veronica Escobar, a former El Paso County judge, coalesced national support with endorsements from EMILY's List and BOLD PAC. Former El Paso County School Board President Dori Fenenbock isn't far behind her in fundraising with \$220,000 in cash on hand. But Escobar leads with \$290,000 in the bank, and EMILY's List's independent expenditure is out with its first 2018 spending to boost Escobar in English- and Spanish-language TV ads.

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plaintiffs. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick did not join the suit — nor did retiring GOP Reps. Pat Meehan, Charlie Dent and Bill Shuster." [Full story.](#)

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By Maggie Severns | 02/23/2018 05:42 AM EDT

With Elena Schneider, Zach Montellaro, and Daniel Strauss

Campaign Pro Race Dashboard, POLITICO Pro's campaign tracking solution, is revamped and ready for 2018. Dive into campaigns with Candidate Pages and a dedicated Race Dashboard for each House, Senate and Gubernatorial contest. The Campaign Pro Race Dashboard includes FEC campaign finance data on federal elections and is available for POLITICO Pro customers subscribed to Pro Campaigns. [Get started.](#)

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GOVERNOR'S BRAWL — "POLITICO's top 10 governor's races," by POLITICO's Daniel Strauss: While Washington obsesses over congressional elections and gyrations in the generic ballot, the 36 races for governor across the country this fall could be the most consequential contests of 2018.

— Special and off-year elections across the country suggest a possible Democratic wave that could reduce the party's historic deficit: Only 16 of the nation's 50 governors are Democrats. But 23 of the three-dozen gubernatorial races this year are in Republican-held states. [Full story.](#)

POPPING LAST NIGHT — "Missouri governor indicted after accusation he tried to blackmail woman," by POLITICO's Steven Shepard: "Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens was indicted by a grand jury in St. Louis Thursday on a charge of invasion of privacy, after the ex-husband of a woman with whom Greitens had an extramarital affair said the now-governor tried to blackmail her. The indictment was announced by St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kimberly Gardner, who said the alleged crime occurred in March 2015." (St. Louis Public Radio [tweeted](#) Greitens' mugshot.)

— **Greitens said he is innocent and attacked Gardner in a statement:** "As I have said before, I made a personal mistake before I was governor. I did not commit a crime," Greitens said. "With today's disappointing and misguided political decision, my confidence in our prosecutorial system is shaken, but not broken. I know this will be righted soon. The people of Missouri deserve better than a reckless liberal prosecutor who uses her office to score political points. I look forward to the legal remedies to reverse this action."

— **Meanwhile in Arizona:** "Congressional candidate Steve Montenegro acknowledged Thursday that he [traded](#) text messages for months with a junior legislative staffer, including receiving a topless photo from the woman. But he maintained he had done nothing inappropriate," the Arizona Republic reports. "Montenegro, a minister who has made his family and faith central to his bid for a vacant West Valley congressional seat, said in an interview with the *Washington Examiner* published Thursday that he didn't ask for the topless photo and tried to protect the woman's career after the November incident. ... But at a Thursday afternoon news conference, the staffer, Stephanie Holford, said through her attorney that she sent Montenegro nude photos on several occasions, which also included explicit discussions on Snapchat." [Full story.](#)

Days until the 2018 election: 257

Upcoming election dates — Arizona 8th District special primary: Feb. 27. **Texas primaries:** March 6.

Pennsylvania 18th District special election: March 13. **Illinois primaries:** March 20.

Thanks for joining us! You can email tips to the Campaign Pro team at sbland@politico.com, eschneider@politico.com, krobillard@politico.com, dstrauss@politico.com and mseverns@politico.com.

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@politicoscott](#), [@ec_schneider](#), [@politicokevin](#), [@danielstrauss4](#) and [@maggie severns](#).

WATCH LIVE: Throughout the day today, we're livestreaming our conversations with the nation's governors - live from the Microsoft Innovation and Policy Center. Tune in [here](#).

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and would rob voters of their opportunity to flip Texas' 7th in November." [See the DCCC's posting here.](#) [Full story.](#)

CHALLENGER IN A SAFE SEAT — "Wyoming's Barrasso draws independent challenger," by Edward Isaac Dovere: "David Dodson, a Jackson-based former CEO and part-time lecturer at Stanford, will jump into the Senate race on Thursday as an independent, saying in an interview ahead of the announcement that his wife has given him the sign-off to spend \$1 million, and, 'if she's not looking, I'd be willing to put in more.' ... Dodson is the latest candidate to jump in with the backing of a group called Unite America, which is providing campaign infrastructure and donor support for independent candidates." [Full story.](#)

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HEAD LIKE A POLL — "Schuette internal shows him leading Calley in Michigan GOP primary," by POLITICO's Daniel Strauss: "Michigan state Attorney General Bill Schuette has a large lead over Lt. Gov. Brian Calley in the Republican primary for governor, according to a new poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies for Schuette's gubernatorial campaign. The internal poll shows Schuette leading Calley, 42 percent to 15 percent, with state Sen. Patrick Colbeck at 5 percent and physician Jim Hines at 2 percent.

"A polling memo authored by Neil Newhouse and Robert Blizzard of Public Opinion Strategies cites President Donald Trump's endorsement of Schuette as a boon to the attorney general's campaign: Eighty-four percent of Republican primary voters have a favorable view of Trump, while only 14 percent have an unfavorable view of him." [Full story.](#)

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SCORECARD ALERT — Club for Growth is out with its annual scorecard "based on issues relating to limited government and economic growth." Sens. [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.), [Pat Toomey](#) (R-Pa..) and [James Lankford](#) (R-Okl.) all received perfect scores, while Rep. [Andy Biggs](#) (R-Ariz.) is the only House member to score 100 percent. [The scorecards.](#)

AROUND THE MAP — Quick takes from across the country:

SENATE

Tennessee: Ivanka Trump helped broker a peace between Sen. [Bob Corker](#) and the president, the [Tennessean](#) reported.

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GOVERNOR

Illinois: Internal numbers from J.B. Pritzker's campaign give him a sizable lead over his Democratic primary opponents, with 37 percent to Chris Kennedy's 23 and Daniel Biss at 21 percent, [POLITICO Playbook Illinois](#) reported.

More Illinois: Our Revolution endorsed Biss, per a statement from his campaign.

Maryland: Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, a Democrat, chose Valerie Ervin as his running mate, via [Bethesda Magazine](#).

Michigan: 38 county prosecutors endorsed Schuette for governor, per a press release.

More Michigan: The progressive group Justice Democrats endorsed Abdul El-Sayed for governor in the Democratic primary, according to a press release.

Ohio: Democrat John Heavey, a doctor who surprised the field by loaning his campaign \$1.5 million, did not qualify for the ballot, according to the secretary of state's office, via the [Columbus Dispatch](#).

CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Looks Dr'd. Can't someone just do a clean excel doc and pdf to me?" a bank employee who allegedly conspired with Paul Manafort said after Manafort allegedly sent the bank a forged profit-and-loss statement, according to a new 32-count [indictment](#). (H/t POLITICO's Josh Gerstein.)

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/campaign-pros-morning-score/2018/02/money-race-in-texas-primaryes-113415>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

POLITICO's top 10 governor's races [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 02/23/2018 05:03 AM EDT

While Washington obsesses over congressional elections and gyrations in the generic ballot, the 36 races for governor across the country this fall could be the most consequential contests of 2018.

Special and off-year elections across the country suggest a possible Democratic wave that could reduce the party's historic deficit: Only 16 of the nation's 50 governors are Democrats. But 23 of the three-dozen gubernatorial races this year are in Republican-held states.

These races are critical to both parties' plans over the next four years: They can have a major impact on President Donald Trump's efforts to implement a conservative agenda, and many of these governors will play an important role in the redistricting process following the 2020 Census, shaping political maps for the coming decade.

Much has happened since we last updated our governors' race rankings late last year. In Illinois, both parties' front-runners have been besieged by their primary opponents, with just three-and-a-half weeks until voters go to the polls to pick the nominees. The Ohio primary isn't until May, but both parties have fights ahead there, too. In Alaska, the sitting, independent governor's approval ratings have plummeted, raising GOP hopes of taking back the Republican-leaning state in the fall.

As governors from across the country descend on Washington for the annual meeting of the National Governors Association, here is POLITICO's updated list of the 10 governorships most likely to change parties in November.

1. Illinois — Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner is running for reelection. (Previous ranking: 1)

Rauner remains the most vulnerable governor in America — but much has changed ahead of the [March 20 primary](#). Rauner's primary challenger, state Rep. Jeanne Ives, [is running](#) incendiary television ads aimed at turning conservatives against the incumbent. But things may be even more unsettled on the Democratic side: Controversial comments by self-funding front-runner J.B. Pritzker about African-Americans has widened an opening for his opponents in the primary. State Sen. Daniel Biss has emerged as a top competitor to Pritzker in the primary and points to polls of him leading Rauner in the general election. Both Rauner and Biss have been forced to begin airing attack ads against their two main primary rivals. Rauner and Pritzker, both billionaires, are still likely to win their bruising primaries, setting up the general election to be among the most expensive state races in the nation's history.

2. Maine — Republican Gov. Paul LePage is term-limited. (3)

No clear front-runner has emerged among the handful of candidates in [Republican gubernatorial primary](#) to succeed LePage, but state Senate President Mike Thibodeau and former state Health and Human Services Commissioner Mary Mayhew are positioned to vie for the nomination. Democrats are eager to retake control of the governor's mansion — and while state Attorney General Janet Mills leads the primary field, attorney Adam Cote and former state House Speaker Mark Eves are running competitively in the primary, racking up endorsements and strong fundraising numbers.

3. New Mexico — Republican Gov. Susana Martinez is term-limited. (2)

Democrats face a contested primary: Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, the front-runner, has to fend off state Sen. Joe Cervantes and businessman Jeff Apodaca. Republican Rep. Steve Pearce is set to coast to the GOP nomination. Nevertheless, Democrats are bullish about their chances in New Mexico. Martinez's approval ratings are underwater, and Hillary Clinton won the state in 2016. Also fueling Democratic optimism: Other prominent Democrats, like Sen. Martin Heinrich, are the heavy favorites to win their respective races.

4. Nevada — Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval is term-limited. (5)

Even if 2018 is a wave election for Democrats, Republicans could still come out holding on to Nevada's governor's mansion, where Sandoval remains popular, and state Attorney General Adam Laxalt holds a strong position at the front of the Republican primary for governor. Laxalt is competing against businessman Jared Fisher and state Treasurer Dan Schwartz in the GOP primary, but most polling shows Laxalt comfortably ahead. Democrats have a heated primary on their hands between Clark County Chairman Steve Sisolak and Clark County Vice Chairwoman Chris Giunchigiani. Giunchigiani has picked up endorsements from EMILY's List and the Nevada State Education Association, while Sisolak has been endorsed by other influential unions, like the Clark County Education Association.

5. Alaska — Independent Gov. Bill Walker is seeking reelection. (7)

Walker's approval ratings have plummeted down below 30 percent, according to Morning Consult's polling over the fourth quarter of last year. A trio of Republicans are running in the gubernatorial primary to unseat Walker. Unless a strong Democratic candidate emerges — former Sen. Mark Begich has flirted with a possible candidacy — or Walker's approval ratings improve, the race could be a strong pickup opportunity for Republicans.

6. Connecticut — Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy is retiring. (4)

In the second half of 2017, Republicans were optimistic that Malloy's notably low approval ratings and a large unwieldy primary opened the window for a GOP win in deep-blue Connecticut. But the Republican primary, like the Democratic one, is crowded and has shown no signs of straightening out. A Tremont Public Advisors poll released this week found the generic gubernatorial ballot statistically tied, compared to a GOP lead on the generic ballot last year. Still, a Democratic victory is far from certain, and former Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz and 2006 Senate nominee Ned Lamont are competing in a crowded primary.

7. Florida — Republican Gov. Rick Scott is term-limited. (6)

Florida is one of four states — along with Nevada, Arizona and Ohio — where the Republican Governors Association has pre-booked a total of \$20 million in advertising for the fall. Of those four states, the most money, \$9.4 million, is going to Florida. Republicans face a massive, protracted battle in the late-August primary, however, between the well-funded state Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam and Trump-endorsed Rep. Ron DeSantis. The same is true in the four-way Democratic primary between Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, former Rep. Gwen Graham, businessman Chris King, and former Miami Beach Mayor Phillip Levine. The few polls of the primary have shown Graham leading, but a large chunk of those surveyed said they are undecided.

8. Ohio — Republican Gov. John Kasich is term-limited. (9)

Both parties are trying to cull their primary fields ahead of the early May vote. The state GOP central committee endorsed state Attorney General Mike DeWine over Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor, but Taylor has vowed to stay in the race. (Rep. Jim Renacci switched to the Senate race last month, making it a two-way race between DeWine and Taylor.) Meanwhile, on the Democratic side, former Rep. Dennis Kucinich roiled the race when he entered the contest on the eve of the filing deadline. Kucinich, this week, was endorsed by the Bernie Sanders-aligned Our Revolution group, a surprising move since frontrunner Richard Cordray had been scooping up endorsements from former competitors and Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Cordray is still the favorite for the nomination, but he's being forced to respond to the iconoclastic Kucinich.

9. Maryland — Republican Gov. Larry Hogan is running for reelection. (10)

Hogan's approval ratings remain stellar. A Goucher College poll this week showed 61 percent of Marylanders approve of Hogan's job performance, while only 18 percent disapprove. But take a closer look at Hogan's reelect numbers: Just 47 percent say they will vote to reelect Hogan, while 43 percent say they definitely or lean toward voting for another candidate. The same poll showed a wide-open Democratic primary race. Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker led Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz in the Democratic primary, 19 percent to 12 percent, with former NAACP president and CEO Ben Jealous at 10 percent.

10. Wisconsin — Republican Gov. Scott Walker is running for reelection. (Not rated)

Walker is seeking a third term in 2018, and Democrats are hungry to stop him. A surprise Democratic victory in a state Senate special election last month has Democrats optimistic they might finally topple Walker, who has won three statewide elections since 2010. But there's no clear front-runner in the primary among the more than a dozen candidates running. Walker's reelection team has already begun aggressively running a campaign aimed at highlighting the governor's accomplishments. Walker himself has also made sure to endorse and hold fundraisers around the country for gubernatorial and Senate candidates to help build his network for reelection.

Honorable mentions (in alphabetical order): Georgia, Iowa, Michigan (8), Pennsylvania, Tennessee

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Wyoming's Barrasso draws independent challenger [Back](#)

By Edward-Isaac Dovere | 02/22/2018 10:31 AM EDT

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso is getting a self-financing challenger after all — but it'll be in the general election instead of a Republican primary.

David Dodson, a Jackson-based former CEO and part-time lecturer at Stanford, will jump into the Senate race on Thursday as an independent, saying in an interview ahead of the announcement that his wife has given him the sign-off to spend \$1 million, and, "if she's not looking, I'd be willing to put in more."

Dodson is the latest candidate to jump in with the backing of a group called Unite America, which is providing campaign infrastructure and donor support for independent candidates for Senate in Maryland and Missouri, and for gubernatorial candidates in Maine, Kansas and Alaska, where Gov. Bill Walker is running for a second term. They say they're hoping to create a bloc of senators who could, by providing swing votes in a closely divided chamber, shape the agenda across a range of issues.

Megadonor Foster Friess and Blackwater USA founder Erik Prince had both been talked about as potential candidates against Barrasso in the Republican primary, but neither materialized. Dodson, a longtime Republican himself, said he believes that making Barrasso run hard across the state through the general election is the only real path to victory.

"I want as an independent, I want to return my party to the party of Alan Simpson and Ronald Reagan," he said.

Dodson called the Affordable Care Act a good start but said it had failed at keeping costs down — and that Barrasso, one of three trained physicians in the Senate, failed at coming up with an alternative. He said he supports increased border security and pathways to green cards for immigrants in the country legally but admitted that with only a few hundred so-called Dreamers in his state, that issue was not at the top of his mind.

And he called the tax bill passed by Republicans at the end of last year "an insult to the middle class."

"A middle-class tax cut, to me, is where I get nothing and the middle class gets what they deserve," Dodson said.

Barrasso, who has about \$5 million on hand, hasn't faced a serious challenge in either of his two previous elections to hold his seat. There is a Democrat in the race, Gary Trauner, but the race is far from the top of the party's prospects.

Dodson is hoping to take Barrasso by surprise, blaming him for the economic troubles in his state.

"He's got a fight on his hands," Dodson said. "I intend to take his job from him so I can provide jobs to the people of Wyoming."

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End Citizens United launches TV ads in PA-18 [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 02/22/2018 09:31 PM EDT

End Citizens United is jumping into the special election for a congressional seat in western Pennsylvania with TV ads attacking Republican Rick Saccone for accepting "legislative perks" as a state legislator and urging voters to "clean house."

Saccone "promised no legislative perks in Harrisburg — called 'em 'lavish,' then, gobbled 'em up," the ad's narrator says. "Spending \$435,000 taxpayer dollars on himself."

"Let's clean house," the ad's narrator continues. "Conor Lamb refuses donations from corporate PACs. Period." The ad effort is backed by a \$250,000 buy, which includes digital ads.

Lamb has largely gone without outside help in the special election. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spent \$250,000 on a TV buy in early February, but the committee has been off the air for more than a week.

Republican outside groups, including the National Republican Congressional Committee, have dumped millions on the race to boost Saccone and damage Lamb.

Watch the ad [here](#).

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Schuette internal shows him leading Calley in Michigan GOP primary [Back](#)

By Daniel Strauss | 02/23/2018 05:02 AM EDT

Michigan state Attorney General Bill Schuette has a large lead over Lt. Gov. Brian Calley in the Republican primary for governor, according to a new poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies for Schuette's gubernatorial campaign.

The internal poll shows Schuette leading Calley, 42 percent to 15 percent, with state Sen. Patrick Colbeck at 5 percent and physician Jim Hines at 2 percent.

A polling memo authored by Neil Newhouse and Robert Blizzard of Public Opinion Strategies cites President Donald Trump's endorsement of Schuette as a boon to the attorney general's campaign: 84 percent of Republican primary voters have a favorable view of Trump, while only 14 percent have an unfavorable view of him.

"Bill Schuette is the clear frontrunner in the GOP primary for governor and has the support of President Donald Trump — the most popular Republican figure in the country — and Vice President Mike Pence," Newhouse and Blizzard write in the memo. "For the Schuette campaign to maintain this wide lead, we're going to need to continue to share the attorney general's vision for Michigan and have the financial resources to combat the negative attacks sure to come from our opponents."

The poll was conducted February 10-13 among 800 Republican primary voters. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

[Read the memo.](#)

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Trump super PAC to spend \$1M in Pennsylvania special election [Back](#)

By Alex Isenstadt | 02/22/2018 09:58 AM EDT

The pro-Trump super PAC America First Action is launching a \$1 million ad-buy in support of Pennsylvania special election candidate Rick Saccone, according to a person familiar with the group's plans.

The organization will start airing digital ads later this week and TV ads next week. The [special election](#) is March 13.

The GOP cavalry has descended on the contest, with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence making trips to the southwestern Pennsylvania district. GOP groups are investing millions to prop up Saccone, a state representative who is facing off against Democratic attorney Conor Lamb.

Trump and Pence are expected to return to the district before the election.

Polls show Saccone with only a narrow lead in the race, and Republicans worry that a loss in the conservative district could portend a Democratic wave in November.

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Boyle will seek North Philly seat [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 02/22/2018 01:35 PM EDT

Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. [Brendan Boyle](#) announced today that he planned to run in the newly drawn 2nd District — a seat that covers Philadelphia, but does not overlap with Montgomery County — parts of which Boyle has represented since 2014.

"I know my friends, supporters, and constituents in Montgomery County who reached out to me this week and asked me to run in Montco will be disappointed with my decision," Boyle said in a statement [posted](#) to Facebook. "But regardless of district lines or number, I won't stop working for the causes we care about."

Boyle, who was first elected in 2014, opted for the vacant Philadelphia-based seat over the 4th District, which covers Montgomery County. According to [Daily Kos Elections](#), roughly half of Boyle's current constituents live in the new 2nd District, while 43 percent live in the 4th District.

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Pennsylvania GOP House members seek to stop new congressional map [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 02/22/2018 05:04 PM EDT

Eight GOP members of Pennsylvania's congressional delegation are joining state Senate leadership in asking a federal district court to block the state Supreme Court's new congressional map and order Pennsylvania to use the now-discarded districts for the 2018 elections.

Reps. [Lou Barletta](#), [Ryan Costello](#), [Mike Kelly](#), [Tom Marino](#), [Scott Perry](#), [Keith Rothfus](#), [Lloyd Smucker](#) and [Glenn Grothman](#) joined the lawsuit as plaintiffs. Rep. [Brian Fitzpatrick](#) did not join the suit — nor did retiring GOP Reps. [Pat Meehan](#), [Charlie Dent](#) and [Bill Shuster](#).

Fitzpatrick's district is the least-impacted seat by the new map, according to data from [Daily Kos Elections](#). Barletta, meanwhile, joined the suit, though he has launched a Senate campaign and isn't seeking reelection to the House.

The plaintiffs are asking for immediate relief, citing the beginning of the candidate filing period in Pennsylvania on Feb. 27.

Legislative leaders said Wednesday they had also filed an emergency stay application with the U.S. Supreme Court.

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Mueller adds new tax, bank fraud charges against Manafort, Gates [Back](#)

By Josh Gerstein | 02/22/2018 04:39 PM EDT

Special counsel Robert Mueller turned up the pressure on former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and aide Rick Gates, as a federal grand jury returned a new indictment Thursday charging the two men with tax and bank fraud.

The new 32-count indictment returned by a grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia comes after Mueller separately charged the pair in Washington last year with money laundering and failing to register as foreign agents for their work related to Ukraine.

The new indictment accuses Manafort and Gates of dramatically understating their income on federal tax returns filed from 2010 through 2014. The pair is also accused of bank fraud totaling more than \$20 million tied to three loans Manafort applied for in connection with various homes he owns.

In all, Manafort and Gates laundered more than \$30 million in income, chiefly from their Ukraine work, the new indictment alleges.

None of the charges currently facing the pair appears to relate directly to the core of Mueller's investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign. But the special counsel has jurisdiction to pursue certain crimes he finds in the course of his probe and appears to have approval from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to pursue some matters the FBI was investigating before Mueller was named last May.

Some of the alleged bank fraud appears to have overlapped in time with the Trump campaign. Manafort and Gates joined the campaign in the spring of 2016 to help plan for the Republican National Convention, and Manafort was campaign chairman from May until he resigned on Aug. 19. But the White House has subsequently tried to distance itself from him, with Trump saying at one point that Manafort only worked for him for a "very short period of time."

Gates reportedly continued at the campaign after Manafort left, although precisely what Gates did during that period is unclear.

The scrutiny of the pair so far has focused on their lobbying work on behalf of the Ukrainian government and former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych from 2006 to 2015. The initial indictment claimed they generated tens of millions of dollars through that work, which was then laundered through "scores of United States and foreign corporations, partnerships, and bank accounts."

Prosecutors claim in the new indictment that Manafort made various misrepresentations to obtain loans, including forging profit-and-loss statements for his consulting businesses.

Manafort spokesman Jason Maloni issued a statement Thursday night denying the latest charges.

"Paul Manafort is innocent of the allegations set out in the newly filed indictments and he is confident that he will be acquitted of all charges," Maloni said. "The new allegations against Mr. Manafort, once again, have nothing to do with Russia and 2016 election interference/collusion. Mr. Manafort is confident that he will be acquitted and violations of his constitutional rights will be remedied."

No new defendants were charged in the latest indictment, but it alleges that the men had a "conspirator" at least one of the lenders from which Manafort obtained the loans.

In response to one of the profit-and-loss statements provided in connection with a loan request, the unnamed "conspirator" allegedly replied that the document was too obviously faked.

"Looks Dr'd. Can't someone just do a clean excel doc and pdf to me?" the indictment quotes the bank employee as replying.

Based on the description of the loan in the court document, the lender appears to be Providence, R.I.-based Citizens Bank. A spokesman there declined to comment on Thursday.

Prosecutors said the case against Manafort and Gates filed in Washington in October will continue, although it appears a few charges from that indictment are being moved to the Virginia case. Defendants in tax cases have the right to insist on being charged in their home district. Mueller's team said they were willing to consolidate the case in Washington, but Manafort declined to agree to face those charges in Washington, according to a separate court filing prosecutors made public Thursday.

Manafort's decision is yet another signal that his defense is playing legal hardball with the prosecution, complicating and potentially prolonging their work. However, his decision to elect two separate, parallel cases will also increase the complexity and cost of the legal defense for both Manafort and Gates.

"It's an absolutely untenable situation for defense attorneys," said Peter Zeidenberg, a former federal prosecutor now with Arent Fox in Washington. "It's literally twice the work. It's twice the money. It's two different judges."

Some attorneys believe Manafort's approach indicates he is hoping for a pardon from Trump. Taking a tough line with the prosecution and prolonging the case could stave off a potential reckoning in court, after which the president could step in. However, this strategy means sustaining a costly legal defense for what is likely to be more than a year.

"That's what makes this a freakishly unusual case," said Patrick Cotter, a former federal prosecutor. "You aren't usually thinking, 'What if my client gets a pardon?'"

Gates' legal team has been in flux recently, with his existing lawyers, Shanlon Wu, Walter Mack and AnneMarie McAvoy, seeking to withdraw for reasons that have not been explained publicly. Gates does not appear to have the same financial resources as Manafort and could have more difficulty sustaining a defense.

Longtime Washington defense lawyer Thomas Green of Sidley Austin formally entered an appearance in the case Thursday and consented to the other lawyers departing.

Green has a reputation for negotiating plea deals in high-profile cases, but Cotter said he believes that if a plea deal with Gates was imminent, prosecutors would not have pulled the trigger on the new indictment.

"It's very hard for me to imagine a scenario where they had any agreement with Gates for cooperation and then they filed a superseding indictment. That doesn't make any sense," said the ex-prosecutor, now at the Greensfeder Hemker law firm in Chicago.

Still, the detail in the new indictment about Gates alleged involvement in crafting false financial statements for Manafort's loan applications adds even more pressure to Gates to cut a deal, lawyers said. While the alleged money laundering in the first indictment is complex and the obligations to register as a foreign agent can be highly technical, the new indictment may be easier to prove to a jury because the alleged fraud is easier to understand.

"It's cruder," Cotter said. "It's got a lot of jury appeal.... The detail in the superseding indictment sends a message to him that if the case sees the inside of a courtroom with a jury, there's no way you get acquitted. You're going to be chopping away at an iceberg with a toothpick."

Kyle Cheney contributed to this report.

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5 things to watch in the first primary of 2018

By Steven Shepard and Elena Schneider

03/06/2018 05:16 AM EDT

The road to the House majority begins Tuesday in Texas, where Democrats must cull crowded candidate fields in the first primary election of 2018.

Early voting numbers suggest high levels of enthusiasm on the left, particularly in historically Republican, suburban districts around Houston and the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

But the party needs nominees who are well-suited to take on longtime GOP incumbents in these places in what will be the first test of House Democrats' strategy to negotiate crowded party primaries.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has already tried to scuttle a candidate it views as a weaker general-election prospect in a Houston-area district. But that candidate, activist Laura Moser, could advance on Tuesday despite the committee's involvement.

Texas has a runoff threshold: Candidates must earn a majority of the vote in order to clinch the nomination, or the top two finishers will advance to a second round of voting on May 22. In most of the contested House races, the candidate fields are so large that it's unlikely anyone will clinch their party's nomination outright.

Whatever happens Tuesday, one thing is certain: the Texas congressional delegation — the second largest in the House — will see significant turnover this year, with eight of the state's 36 seats open this year.

But the Texas primaries aren't only about the House. Sen. Ted Cruz will face GOP voters for the first time since he was "booed off the stage" — as President Donald Trump put it at the time — at the 2016 Republican convention. And Gov. Greg Abbott is seeking to run up the score in his bid for a second term, potentially with an eye toward federal office.

Both parties will be monitoring turnout trends to see if Democrats are any closer to their long-deferred dream of turning the nation's second-most-populous state blue.

Here are five things to watch as Texans go to the polls on Tuesday:

Democrats are showing up in droves

Tuesday is Election Day, but nearly a million voters in the state's 15 most-populous counties have already cast their ballots via mail and in-person early voting.

The early-voting figures are consistent with other elections in the Trump era: Democrats are energized and voting at higher rates in nonpresidential elections than in recent history.

In Texas' 15 largest counties, more Democrats have voted early (465,000) than Republicans (420,000) through last Friday, the final day of early voting. Compare that with the last midterm election, in 2014, when only 227,000 Democrats voted early, compared with 365,000 Republicans.

"It fits a pattern we've seen — Democrats are engaged at higher levels than Republicans are," said Michael McDonald, a professor at the University of Florida who studies early-voting data. "It's not that Republicans aren't engaged, but what's different is that Democrats are very engaged compared to 2014. ... This is another piece of the puzzle that fits into a much larger picture that suggests — yes, Democrats are looking to have a good year in 2018."

Both parties will be monitoring the Election Day vote to see if the trend holds. But even if Democrats are more energized in February and March, that wouldn't necessarily be the case in November.

Democrats have talked about turning Texas blue for more than a decade. For all the attention then-state Sen. Wendy Davis' gubernatorial campaign received in 2014, Abbott defeated her by more than 20 points.

Abbott entered 2018 with a massive, \$43 million war chest. The leading Democrats in the race — former Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez and Andrew White, the son of the late Gov. Mark White — aren't seen as serious threats to Abbott.

It would also take a massive wave for Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who should become the Democratic nominee for Senate on Tuesday night, to threaten Cruz in the Senate race. But Tuesday's GOP primary will indicate whether Cruz has issues with Republican voters at the poles of the party spectrum: those who were once furious with his failure to endorse Trump in 2016, and moderates turned off by his strident conservative policies and tactics.

Suburban watch: Dallas and Houston

Two House seats key to the Democrats' shot at the majority track through the suburbs of Dallas and Houston, affluent and well-educated neighborhoods that turned against Trump in 2016. The crowded Democratic primaries won't yield definitive answers Tuesday as to whom they will run against those Republican incumbents, but it will narrow the field.

In Houston, the DCCC's efforts to scuttle Moser's bid to face GOP Rep. John Culberson will be put to the test — a first for the committee weighed down by packed, well-funded primaries across the country. Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, an attorney endorsed by EMILY's List, appears to lead the pack. But two other Democrats — oncologist Jason Westin and nonprofit executive Alex Triantaphyllis — are in the hunt for the second spot.

If Moser finishes second, Democratic operatives are worried that other candidates in crowded primaries will be emboldened to stick it out, even if the party comes after them.

In Dallas, where GOP Rep. Pete Sessions is seeking reelection, three top Democratic candidates all hail from the Obama administration. Ed Meier, a former State Department official, led his Democratic opponents in fundraising throughout 2017. But Colin Allred, a former Housing department official, and Lillian Salerno, who served in the Agriculture Department, both got help from high profile surrogates, like Julián Castro and Kirsten Gillibrand. But Brett Shipp could be a dark horse in the race, as the former TV reporter has built a personal brand and name recognition in the district.

So far, the race has remained friendly — all of the top four Democrats said they'd back the eventual nominee — but that could change in a head-to-head runoff.

Washington meddling in Democratic primaries

Moser isn't the only Democrat who suffered an intrusion from Washington in her primary. State Sen. Sylvia Garcia, who would be the first Hispanic woman to represent Texas in Congress, appeared to be a lock on replacing Democratic Rep. Gene Green, who endorsed her, for his eastern Houston seat. But then Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) weighed in.

Two weeks before Election Day, the Senate minority leader endorsed health care executive Tahir Javed, a first-time candidate and longtime fundraiser who brought in \$1.2 million for his own bid, most of it from his own bank account. Javed's election would also be historic, as Texas hasn't sent an Asian-American to Congress. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus said it was "disappointed" by Schumer's intervention.

Garcia told The Texas Tribune that she's "still confident we can get out of this without a runoff."

The personality primaries

Six Republican congressmen opted for retirement ahead of 2018, opening up several conservative-leaning seats throughout Texas. But, so far, their potential replacements aren't distinguishing themselves through policy differences, only through their personal profiles.

"All these multi-candidate races are very personality-driven so far," said Matt Mackowiak, a Republican consultant in the state. "There haven't been any sharp policy differences, if any. Everyone is supportive of Trump, of the tax bill, of the immigration plan — it's all been pretty standard Republican fare."

Local operatives expect most of these crowded races will head to a runoff, as it's unlikely that any candidate will reach 50 percent. Four of those primaries boast nine or more Republicans, including the 18-candidate race for Rep. Lamar Smith's central Texas seat.

The one race that could be decided Tuesday night is Rep. Sam Johnson's replacement to represent the north Dallas suburbs. Van Taylor, a state senator, outraised and outspent his GOP opponents, along with locking down an endorsement from Abbott.

A threat to the Bush name

It's been a tough stretch for the Bush family. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush was battered throughout his 2016 presidential campaign, staggering out of the race without even earning a third-place finish in any of the GOP nominating contests.

Trump, meanwhile, has framed his presidency in part as a repudiation of the men who came before him in the Oval Office, including George W. Bush.

That's what made Trump's endorsement of incumbent state Land Commissioner George P. Bush so interesting. The younger Bush, Jeb's son, has spent \$2 million to fend off a primary challenge from Jerry Patterson, Bush's predecessor in the job.

Bush has mostly ducked Patterson and the three other candidates running in Tuesday's primary. But Tuesday's primary could serve as a sign that — despite his profligate spending — the political power of the Bush name is waning, even in Texas.

And if the Bush-Patterson race is close, the presence of three other candidates could deny Bush a majority of the vote, forcing the incumbent into a runoff that extends the intraparty fight through the spring.

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Rush transcript:

midterm primary season officially kicks off tomorrow in a big way, in a big state. Texas voters are heading to the polls tomorrow, and we could get the first clues about how big avenue blue wave may be heading for republicans. right now we're seeing evidence of highly motivated democratic voters in a lot of places, including deep in the heart of Texas. the early voting numbers there are staggering, nearly 50,000 more democrats than republicans have voted so far in the state's 15 largest counties. that is a 105% increase in democratic turnout from 2014 while the gop turnout has increased just 15%. yes, this is just the early vote count in the 15 largest counties which are more democratic but if democrats can maintain their enthusiasm through the midterms could it translate into results. that is the Texas-sized question. they house districts in Texas voted for hillary clinton over donald trump in 2016. all three could be pick up opportunities for democrats. and if that kind of enthusiasm holds, could democrat beto o'rourke give ted cruz a scare. joining me now is one of the top political observers out there, charlie cook, editor of the cook report. charlie, your top line reaction to what is going on in Texas right now?

i think it is just one more example of -- that intensity matters and if you think about the last six mid-term elections, either the house or the flipped in four out of six, and turnout is lower in these mid-term elections. so who votes really matters. and with apologies to any civics teachers watching, the two strongest emotions are anger and hate and this intensity donald trump was able to harness in 2016, but right now the anger, the hate, it is on the democratic side. and we've seen that in state legislative elections where democrats have picked up 39 from republicans. republicans have only picked up four. statewide elections, last year, we've seen where republicans who were underperforming in key special congressional elections by seven, eight, nine points, all kinds of diagnostic indicators. canary in the coal mine. we're seeing a significant intensive deferential between the two sides.

you have three Texas house seats that are a toss-up or in the lean gop column. significant again because it is Texas. right now if you are looking at those particular congressmen, would you rather be the incumbent or would you rather be the democratic challenger?

well, to me, the path to -- if democrats get the 24 seats they -- the net gain they need, the 218, i think the path will not lead through the south and it is not going to lead through Texas. to me, if democrats are picking up a couple of seats in Texas, that is icing on the cake. what you are really looking at is a stretch of suburban districts that start in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and just go straight across the country. but there are some in Texas, some in Florida, one in Georgia, where democrats do have some opportunities. but that is not -- that is not where the core of the 24 seats the democrats need to pick up are likely to go. but they could pick up a couple even in Texas. you've got the young women voters that are really hyper agitated and that -- any republican in a district that either hillary clinton carried or that donald trump won by two, three, four points or less, that is in danger.

you name John Col Berson, **Will Hurd**, Pete Sessions as vulnerable republicans and when you are talking about demographics, are you focused on women and younger voter?

no, but that is where -- younger voters tend not to vote in mid-term elections. so anything they do in mid-term elections is -- is something to watch.

the bar is not high for them. put it that way.

exactly, exactly. and a lot of women voters that were thought to feel strongly in 2016, a lot of them didn't vote or threw a vote to Jill Stein or whoever that it did not get behind hillary clinton in the way that barack obama was able to attract minority voters. so this is bringing a lot of people into the party that simply weren't there in 2016.

what about latino voters?

absolutely, absolutely. now, the thing is though -- i'm a little -- in Texas, yes, but i'm not sure what donald trump could have said or done that would have ticked off latino voters more than he did. and they didn't vote.

in the campaign.

in 2016, so that -- that may well happen. but i'm looking more at younger and women voters.

black women voters have been the -- have been the deferential in places like Virginia. is it going to be across the country, the black women voters that come out that could be the difference-maker for democrats over republicans?

that is one group, but it is going to come by -- they already go democratic by big margin. and a lot of african-american women have -- they have voted in reasonably highwell.

yeah, so it is all -- it is all of these things. but we're looking at -- we're looking at a lot of signs that the anger and the mid-term elections tend to be dominated by people that -- whose noses are out of joint and people that are upset. and because the turnout is so much lower in midterms, they have a disproportionate voice and that is what is happening here and that is what we saw for republicans in 2010 and '14.

Trump voters were angry in 2016. democrats are angry had 2018. i guess we'll see if the Trump voters are still as angry as the democratic voters are and who wins out in the polls.

and does that convey over to republicans not named Trump.

very good point. charlie cook, thank you very much.

take care,

Cole Leiter
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From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccccc.org]
Sent: 3/5/2018 3:59:15 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccccc.org]; Comm - Expansion [comm-expansion@dccccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Vice: Texas Is Kicking Off the First Round of the Trump Midterms

Texas Is Kicking Off the First Round of the Trump Midterms

It's fitting that a state with low turnout that tends to be written off by Democrats is launching the 2018 midterms. Here's what you need to know.

Robert Wheel // Vice

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3k7wik/texas-primaries-2018-midterm-guide

Welcome back to House Party, our column looking at the 2018 House of Representative races as midterms approach.

It's still cold as hell and probably at least somewhat dark out when you leave work, but voting has already begun in the 2018 elections. Texas has the earliest primaries in the country, on Tuesday, and early voting began there way back on February 20. If you haven't voted already, have no idea what's going on in Texas politics, or you just want to know what to look for when returns roll in on Tuesday night, we've got you covered. Here's a guide to the six most competitive Democratic primaries as The Resistance takes its first formal step to the midterm ballot box.

Seventh District (West Houston)

Perhaps the most compelling Democratic primary in the state features four viable contenders—which is notable because, in Texas, there's a runoff among the top two candidates if nobody gets more than 50 percent. If you're still on the fence...

Vote For Lizzie Pannill Fletcher if you want to support a moderate, pro-choice woman who cuts the most anodyne profile in this district. The seventh went from backing Mitt Romney by more than 20 points to supporting Clinton by less than 2 percent. In other words, the ideology among regular voters here is pretty safe and corporate. The biggest knock on Fletcher is that she's too friendly with business interests: she doesn't support Medicare for all and is a partner in a law firm that the local AFL-CIO has a beef with. So if you're an organized labor fan...

Vote For Alex Triantaphyllis if you like unions and raising lots of money, and are also OK with living outside the district and some pretty lame campaign ads. Seriously dude, I don't care what the T in Alex T stands for. You've got 15 seconds to tell me about what you stand for and you're spending most of it on your name? It's a good thing you've got more money than anyone else in the race, so you can burn it on that. Also, you're another relative moderate here, so for the progressives in the crowd....

Vote For Jason Westin if you want a viable liberal candidate. This is the district that George H.W. Bush used to represent. It's big on watching golf, NCAA regulations and looking the other way on Enron's accounting fraud. It'll vote for almost any Republican other than Donald Trump, including current Congressman John Culberson. But it's also got a legacy of lousy turnout, and there are a ton of non-voters here who could get excited for the right kind of candidate. A cancer doctor who supports Medicare For All could be such a candidate! Westin's got a ton of progressive endorsements, including, full disclosure, my own. But if you don't want somebody who can win...

ADVERTISEMENT

Vote for Laura Moser if you kinda want Rep. John Culberson to be re-elected. The DCCC's publication of damaging information on her has totally backfired, as nobody seems to be talking anymore about the fact that she appears to have moved back to Houston to run for Congress, that more than half of her PAC's spending (much of it from small dollar donors that use Moser's app) went to her husband's consulting firm, or that she's only got superficial knowledge of the issues. None of the other candidates (who don't differ from her all that much on the issues, especially not Westin) suffer

from those weaknesses. But if you want to hobble the party's chances of winning this seat, or at least ensure the runoff is a vicious bloodbath, then by all means vote for Moser.

32nd District (Suburban Dallas)

In contrast to the Seventh District race, the 32nd District primary has been a mostly positive affair, with little separating the three of the four leading candidates in either ideology or viability. Any of them would be a solid option going forward. But if you really need help deciding...

Vote for Ed Meier if you want someone who can win the war on the airwaves. He's the top fundraiser in the race and Democrats will need every dollar they can get their hands on here. Rep. Pete Sessions is a former NRCC chairman so, for all his shortcomings, he's a crack fundraiser with a ton of connections. Meier, a former Hillary Clinton policy aide, has been able to replicate his former boss's success with donors. But if you want someone whose strength is something other than money....

Vote for Lillian Salerno if you want a woman who's going to fight monopolies to get single-payer healthcare. Salerno most recently served as a USDA official in the Obama Administration, but before that she helped invent a retractable needle designed to prevent healthcare workers from accidentally getting pricked and possibly infected. However, a medical device manufacturer's monopoly prevented the needle from gaining traction (and saving lives) in hospitals. Salerno is determined to use her experience fighting those monopolies to help drive down costs. She'd really be an asset in Congress, but she actually isn't my favorite candidate here, because I think you should...

Vote for Colin Allred if you want a truly inspiring nominee. Allred is a former NFL linebacker (never hurts in Texas) turned HUD lawyer turned political candidate. He's also been the most dynamic of this three on the campaign trail with a volunteer operation that's the envy of any nationwide. The Dallas Morning News said he was the most impressive of the three and people I've talked to in the area agree: there's something special about him. Even if he loses this primary, I doubt this is the last we've heard from Colin Allred.

The fourth viable candidate, Brett Shipp, has been running a less energetic campaign than the other contenders and appears to be trying to coast off of name recognition from his days as a local TV reporter.

23rd District (San Antonio to the Rio Grande)

Voters might actually avoid a runoff in the 23rd, as there are two candidates (Jay Hulings and Gina Ortiz Jones) who have been outpacing the field in both raising money and endorsements. How do you decide between the two?

Vote for Jay Hulings if you want a safe choice. Like Doug Jones in Alabama last year, he's a former federal prosecutor running a competent, left-of-center campaign. He's had some good ads and supports a public option for healthcare. But he may be a bit too careful: he castigated his opponents for dropping f-bombs, which seems both quaint and divorced from the urgency of this political moment. I still think he'd be a good nominee if he won, but I'd rather have someone with more of a fighting spirit. Which is why if I lived here I would...

Vote for Gina Ortiz Jones because she's not afraid to stand up for liberal values. The pro-single-payer Jones is an Air Force vet and talks like one sometimes. She's refreshing, and in a district with one of the lowest voter turnout rates in America, maybe Democrats should try a candidate who could appeal to those nonvoters?

16th District (El Paso)

Beto O'Rourke is vacating this safely Democratic seat to run for Senate and the primary has a pretty stark contrast between its leading candidates. To wit, you should...

Vote for Dori Fenenbock if you are a Republican. Texas doesn't have voter registration by party, but Fenenbock is a Republican in all but name. She voted in the 2008 and 2010 Republican primaries, at one point had received about half of her donations from GOP primary voters, and her allies set up a Republican-led PAC to attack her main rival, Veronica Escobar. She says she's a moderate overall and a conservative on spending and border security. But El Paso is a

Democratic city that takes up a Democratic congressional district, so Fenenbock is running as a Democrat. Which is why you should probably instead....

Vote for Veronica Escobar because you are a Democrat. She's gotten just about every Democratic endorsement you can think of, including left-wing stalwarts like the National Nurses United, the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and the SEIU. Former State Rep. Norma Chavez is trying to run to her left, but Chavez has a nasty history of using anti-gay smears and if forced into a runoff with Fenenbock would be a much weaker candidate than Escobar.

29th District (Latino Houston)

In 1992, Houston's Latino community finally grew to the point where it could support its own congressional district. And since 1992 this seat has been represented by....Gene Green, a moderate white Democrat. But with Green retiring this year, you can....

Vote for Sylvia Garcia if you want the 29th to finally be represented by a progressive Latina. Garcia has lined up the endorsement of just about everyone of note who lives in the 29th and an eager community that's excited to finally elect one of their own. But if you want to disregard all that, then....

Vote for Tahir Javed if you want to reward a fundraiser. Because that's what Chuck Schumer did! I live in the same borough as Schumer and his endorsement doesn't matter to me so I can't imagine anyone in Houston cares about him. But rewarding a money guy to shut Houston Latinos out of this congressional district again, especially when you've just caved on DACA, is a really bad look. Javed didn't even live in Houston until very recently.

21st District (Central Texas)

The 21st contains the heavily Republican Hill Country, conservative-but-turning-purple San Antonio suburbs, and a deep blue slice of Austin. At the start of the decade, it was safely Republican, but only gave Trump 53 percent last year, and now that Rep. Lamar Smith is retiring, Democrats think they have a shot. So...

Vote for Joe Kopser if you want to nominate the strongest general-election candidate. The veteran, scientist and businessman cuts the ideal profile for a Democrat running for a Republican-leaning seat. However, he's committed some liberal apostasies; he supports a public option but not single payer, and is willing to support beefed-up border security in exchange for DACA protections. So you can always...

Vote for Derrick Crowe if you want to send the national party a message: support progressive policies in every district. Crowe is a weaker candidate than Kopser. You know how Republicans tie Democrats in conservative areas to Nancy Pelosi because she's unpopular? Crowe actually worked for Pelosi! But he's more liberal than Kopser on just about everything except maybe gun control. So if you want to send a message to top recruits everywhere that they need to move to the left or they'll lose their primaries, then vote for Crowe.

Robert Wheel (a pseudonym) is an attorney who lives in New York. He tweets here, and his DMs are open.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 5/23/2018 8:03:25 AM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-07: US News & World Report: Texas Liberal Candidate Bashed by National Democrats Loses

Texas Liberal Candidate Bashed by National Democrats Loses

A liberal outsider who founded an activist group against President Donald Trump lost her insurgent bid for the Democratic nomination for a U.S. House seat in Houston.

Paul Weber, Will Weissert // AP

<https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2018-05-22/school-shooting-not-likely-to-decide-texas-runoff-races>

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A liberal outsider who founded an activist group against President Donald Trump lost her insurgent bid for a U.S. House seat in Houston on Tuesday night while a Hispanic former sheriff became the first openly gay and Latina nominee for governor in Texas history.

Both outcomes soothed anxious Democratic Party leaders in a slate of runoffs that otherwise unfolded with little fanfare in Texas, which remained shaken by a high school shooting that killed 10 people just as early voting ended last week.

In one of the most-watched races, Laura Moser lost her Democratic runoff for Congress to Lizzie Pannill Fletcher, a former Planned Parenthood board member. Her defeat was a relief to national Democrats who saw Moser's liberal campaign as an unelectable drag on their chances of retaking control of the House.

And while Democrats have few illusions of ousting Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in November, Lupe Valdez clinching the Democratic nomination for governor spared the party from putting at the top of their ticket Houston businessman Andrew White, a moderate who personally opposes abortion.

Valdez, 70, won despite losing the support of some Hispanic activists over her record on immigration as Dallas sheriff and a lack of fundraising.

In Congress, Fletcher's win was one of three House primary runoffs in Texas that are key to whether Democrats can flip the minimum 24 GOP-held seats they'll need to seize a majority in Congress next year.

Not willing to take any chances, the fundraising arm for congressional Democrats worked to undercut Moser in a district that Republican John Culberson has held since 2001 — but has shifted to a more Hispanic, better educated battleground that Hillary Clinton narrowly won in 2016.

Moser made the runoff despite the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee criticizing her for writing jokingly in 2014 that she'd rather have teeth pulled than live in small-town Texas.

Susan Wright, a voter in Houston, said she thought "Democrats in Washington really screwed up" by attacking Moser.

"It was too bad they decided to make it sound like someone has done a big investigative report on her. I never saw it," Wright said.

Guns did not appear to be a late breakthrough issue in the runoff days after the shooting at Santa Fe High School outside Houston. Hours before polls closed Tuesday, Abbott hosted the first of three round table discussions this week with policymakers to discuss better fortifying schools.

But Abbott hasn't mentioned gun control and Democrats say Texas Republicans — who have a dominating majority in the state Legislature — won't dare cross the National Rifle Association by considering tighter firearm limits. Their party's candidates generally agree on gun control and there hasn't been much debate so far in the runoff races.

Two other Texas districts Democrats hope to flip are Dallas U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions', which supported Clinton instead of Trump, as did Rep. Will Hurd's, encompassing 800 miles of Texas-Mexico border from San Antonio to El Paso. Former NFL linebacker Colin Allred advanced to face Sessions and Air Force veteran Gina Ortiz Jones advanced to take on Hurd.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/6/2018 11:10:10 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: San Antonio Express News (editorial): A Texas general election unlike others?

A Texas general election unlike others?

Express-News Editorial Board

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/editorials/article/A-Texas-general-election-unlike-others-12733695.php>

People head to the polls at the Brook Hollow Branch of the San Antonio Public Library Tuesday for primary elections.

The primary election Tuesday was ostensibly to determine party nominees in Texas — from local judges, district attorneys and legislative and congressional seats, to statewide offices such as U.S. senator, governor and lieutenant governor.

But the importance of this primary is substantially as a scene-setter for a general election that could be unlike any other in Texas' recent history. The outcomes in matchups determined Tuesday — or in the party runoffs in May — will likely signal not just Texas' direction, but how the nation tilts politically in November.

The eyes of the nation will be on Texas. The interest will be in whether a blue wave can occur even in a state as traditionally red as Texas, where Democrats have not won a statewide office since 1994.

But if Democrats just do better than they have, this, too, will be viewed as a bellwether.

The Democratic turnout in early primary voting in Texas — 52 percent to 48 percent for GOP voters — indicates an energized party. This, no doubt, has roots in the 2016 presidential election, with partisan tensions growing in President Donald Trump's first year in office.

Trump's name appeared nowhere on Tuesday's ballots, but candidates in GOP campaigns generally embraced him as much as possible. But perhaps indicating there is little Republican dissatisfaction with Trump, Jenifer Sarver, among the most prominent in this never-Trump camp, didn't appear to be making the runoff in Congressional District 21 to replace longtime U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith in the Republican primary.

Even candidates in Democratic primaries kept busy tarring likely GOP opponents or incumbents as Trumpian — when they weren't walloping each other.

This occurred in the Bexar County district attorney Democratic race as well. Even before incumbent Nico LaHood unleashed a barrage of scurrilous ads against challenger Joe Gonzales over the weekend, Gonzales was correctly citing similarities between Trump's intemperance and how LaHood has run his office and conducted his campaign.

LaHood conceded early in the evening on Tuesday. Gonzales' victory is a welcome repudiation of LaHood and his ham-handed tactics.

Whether a Trump embrace in Republican campaigns continues into the general election will be particularly interesting in the U.S. Senate race. After Tuesday's results, one-term incumbent and former presidential candidate Ted Cruz will be challenged by Democratic nominee Beto O'Rourke, a U.S. representative from El Paso.

Politically, the two candidates couldn't be more different, and other key races will feature similar matchups.

In these races, will a Trump endorsement be welcome or diplomatically avoided? Stay tuned.

Gov. Greg Abbott and Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick each made a bathroom bill, sanctuary cities and border security their legislative calling cards in their first terms. Abbott will face a Democrat who is either an outright winner Tuesday or emerges from a runoff in May. But all the Democratic candidates repudiate those initiatives, just as Patrick's likely opponent — accountant Mike Collier — has.

It appeared by midevening Tuesday that there also will be a GOP runoff in the 21st Congressional District. And, similarly, either of the candidates will offer stark policy contrasts with whoever emerges from the Democratic primary in that race.

In Congressional District 23, incumbent Will Hurd easily fended off a Republican challenger and will face the Democratic nominee emerging from what looked likely to be a runoff race in May. With control of the U.S. House at stake, both national parties are likely to pour resources into this district that can swing either Republican or Democrat.

In all these races, the nominees will offer policy differences that will make for clear choices for voters in either party and will be an indicator for Texas' ultimate political direction.

Of some concern: Though record-breaking turnout occurred in early voting, election day voting remained modest. That means many of Bexar County's 1 million voters still didn't participate despite the high stakes.

This is disappointing.

Blue wave, red wave? We'd rather just see a voter wave, chips falling where they may.

But hold on to your seats. This will be interesting — perhaps even history making.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/5/2018 3:58:15 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-all: Dallas Voice: Democrats score big in early voting totals

Democrats score big in early voting totals

David Taffet // Dallas Voice

<https://www.dallasvoice.com/democrats-score-big-early-voting-totals-10250040.html>

Texas voters came out in record numbers for the primary early voting in a midterm election. Republican early voting was up by 16 percent over 2014. Democratic voting was up by 102 percent.

On Meet the Press on Sunday, March 4, NBC News suggested changing demographics, especially an increase in Hispanic voters who make up 18 percent of the U.S. population but are now 39 percent of the Texas population, played a major role in the increase.

But a number of companies have moved to Texas from blue states over the past few years, bringing with them employees who are horrified by some of Texas' right-wing politicians. For example, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick ran campaign ads in Dallas and around the state criticizing "big city liberals" — as if he had no clue Dallas, San Antonio and Houston are three of the 10 largest cities in the country.

Thousands of people who transferred to traditionally red Collin County with Toyota's move to Plano came from one of California's bluest counties. In Collin and neighboring Denton counties, Democratic voting was up by 250 percent increase.

Another factor in turning off new arrivals could be an especially nasty campaign for a Collin County state Senate seat between Angela Paxton, the wife of indicted Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, and Phil Huffines, the twin brother of homophobic state Sen. Don Huffines. Paxton enriched herself through public service and Huffines was sued for back taxes 11 times, according to the ads. Both candidates have been so tainted, the Democratic challenger, either marriage-equality plaintiff Mark Phariss or Brian Chaput have had much of their work done for them.

And while Patrick's non-stop barrage of TV ads include him proudly declaring he presided over the most productive session of the Texas Legislature, much of the session and virtually all of the special session were devoted to marginalizing transgender Texans. And after all that time and money spent, no bathroom bill passed, and trans Texans were spared that form of legalized discrimination.

NBC News also suggested four seats in U.S. congressional races in Texas are up for grabs including District 32 in North Dallas, currently held by Rep. Pete Sessions. The district voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race but Democrats didn't field a candidate to oppose the congressman in 2016. Sessions, whose main residence is now in Florida, scored no points after the election when he berated constituents at his one town hall meeting this session. This year seven candidates are vying for the Democratic nomination to run against Sessions in November. Former NFL player Colin Allred got the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas endorsements, but others have pledged their support to the community. Also running are Brett Shipp, Ed Meier, Lillian Salerno, George Rodriguez, Ron Marshall and Todd Maternowski.

The other districts considered up for grabs are in West Texas, Houston and San Antonio.

If you didn't early vote, polls are open on Tuesday, March 6, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. You must vote in your local precinct. The Texas primary is the first in the country.

From: Alice Visocchi [visocchi@dccccc.org]
Sent: 5/22/2018 9:53:14 PM
To: Comm - Expansion [comm-expansion@dccccc.org]
Subject: TX-21: Austin American Statesman: Joseph Kopser wins Democratic nod in 21st Congressional District

Joseph Kopser wins Democratic nod in 21st Congressional District

Asher Price // American-Statesman Staff

https://www.statesman.com/news/joseph-kopser-wins-democratic-nod-21st-congressional-district/ZFSysv2eG2bDliyeiu59uj/?utm_campaign=Statesman&utm_source=SF&utm_medium=Twitter

Update 9:45 p.m.: The Associated Press has declared Joseph Kopser the winner of the Democratic nomination in the 21st Congressional District.

Update 8:15 p.m.: With early voting results reported from every county in the 21st Congressional District except for rural Bandera and Real counties, Joseph Kopser holds a lead of 8,077 votes to 5,374 over Mary Wilson in the race for the Democratic nomination. In the Republican race, Chip Roy held a narrow advantage — 9,726 to 9,298 — in early voting tallies from the same set of counties.

Earlier: Republicans and Democrats are fighting for their parties' nominations for an open congressional seat that includes swaths of Central and South Austin.

In the Republican runoff, Chip Roy, the former chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and former first assistant attorney general under Attorney General Ken Paxton, was leading Matt McCall, who lives in Boerne and owns a business that provides human tissue for American military hospitals, in early results.

Half the 10 counties that are wholly or partly in the district have reported early voting returns, according to election tallies kept by the Texas Secretary of State.

The winner will be the favorite to replace U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, R-San Antonio, who is not running after holding the seat in the conservative district for more than three decades.

In the district's Democratic primary runoff, Joseph Kopser, an Austin tech entrepreneur who served 20 years in the Army, was leading Mary Wilson, a minister who lives in Austin, in early results.

According to the most recent campaign finance reports, Wilson's total fundraising is \$71,000 plus \$26,000 she loaned her campaign.

Kopser has raised a little more than \$1 million for the cycle. His campaign also received more than \$11,000 from the Serve America Victory Fund, a political action committee formed by U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Massachusetts, who served in the Marine Corps, to help elect other Democratic military veterans to Congress.

Roy has raised \$732,000 for the cycle, and has benefited from more than \$800,000 in spending by the super PAC Club for Growth Action.

McCall raised \$147,000 for the cycle, plus \$114,000 he loaned to his campaign.

From: Cole Leiter [Leiter@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/5/2018 12:32:57 PM
To: Comm - South [Comm-South@dccc.org]
Subject: TX-23: Newsmax: Female Candidates Way Up as Midterm Primaries Begin

Female Candidates Way Up as Midterm Primaries Begin

By Brian Freeman

<https://www.newsmax.com/politics/female-candidates-2018-midterm-elections-texas-primaries/2018/03/04/id/846713/>

Midterm elections officially kick off this week as voters go to the polls in primaries in Texas, where a record number of at least 50 women are running for congressional seats, **ABC News** reported on Sunday.

It is part of a women's movement that is apparently on the rise, as nationally there are more than 400 female congressional candidates, which is double the number just two years ago.

Texas is certainly symbolic of the trend, as the state currently has only three of its 36 congressional districts represented by women.

Although there are plenty of female conservatives running, part of the inspiration for so many women candidates is a reaction to what many say is President Donald Trump's divisiveness.

"How dare he talk about my heritage and my community in that way?" asked Judy Canales, a Democrat and Latina, who is running in Texas' 23rd district, adding, "I cannot believe our country went in this direction, and so we've got to do something better."

Another woman in that race is Gina Ortiz Jones, who last year was working for the Trump administration but is now running in the Democratic primary against his agenda, asserting that the president took actions that were harmful to women and minority groups.

She said it was not surprising that the people who have the most to lose "have stepped up said, 'You know what? I'm done assuming that someone is going to do for me that what I can do for myself.'"

Texas is also setting a state record for the most number of LGBTQ people running for office, according to OutSmart Magazine.

The at least 49 openly LGBTQ candidates is more than double the previous record.

In general, enthusiasm in the state has been high, as Texans also set a record for early voting numbers this year, with more than 600,000 ballots already cast, the **Laredo Morning Times** reported.

Democrats have so far outvoted Republicans by more than 25,000 ballots since early voting began, the first time this has happened in Texas in a decade.

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From: Rebecca Drago [drago@dccc.org]
Sent: 3/5/2018 6:17:29 AM
To: Comm - National [Comm-National@dccc.org]
Subject: Campaign Pro's Morning Score: Texas primary tests DCCC's strategy — VoteVets jumps into PA-18 — Huerta ends campaign against Valadao

By Steven Shepard | 03/05/2018 05:45 AM EDT

With Kevin Robillard and Maggie Severns

PRIMARY SEASON BEGINS THIS WEEK — The first primaries of the 2018 midterms, in Texas, are only one day away. Let's get straight to the news.

— **"Democrats face first test of primary muscle in Texas race," by Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider in Houston:** "The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee doesn't want Laura Moser as the party's nominee for a House seat in Texas the party sees as critical to its strategy to winning control of the chamber next year. So the committee called her a carpet-bagging opportunist who 'begrudgingly moved' here to run for office in a post on its website. ... Instead, Moser's fundraising has ticked up — she's collected more than \$130,000 since the DCCC post on February 22 — and she's urging voters in a digital ad to '[reject] the system where Washington party bosses tell us who to choose.'" [Full story](#).

— **"Democrats using Trump as foil on Texas airwaves," by Elena in Houston:** "Democratic congressional candidates want to talk about Donald Trump, even in battleground districts. At least according to their television ads, nearly all of which urge voters in Tuesday's primary to back them in order to express opposition to the president, and not the Republican congressman they are vying to face in November. It's a short-sighted strategy aimed at attracting primary support — but will require some fine-tuning in a general election, in which Trump is not at the top of the ballot." [Full story](#).

— **"Texas early voting numbers a 'wake-up call' for GOP as Democrats double their 2014 turnout," by the Dallas Morning News' Jackie Wang in Austin:** "Early voting turnout for this year's Democratic primary doubled since the last midterm election in 2014. According to the Texas secretary of state's website — which tracks only the 15 counties with the most registered voters — 205,583 people voted early in the 2014 Democratic primary. This year, 406,302 Democrats ... voted early — a 98 percent increase. On the GOP side, 352,963 people voted early in the Republican primary. That's a 16 percent increase from 303,858 in 2014." [Full story](#).

— **"A \$6 million candidate dominates in 9-way race to replace ... Rep. Ted Poe," by the Texas Tribune's Abby Livingston in Kingwood, Texas:** "Republican donor and technology consultant Kathaleen Wall ... has dominated the field by spending nearly \$6 million of her own money." [Full story](#).

SPECIAL ELECTION SEASON — We're down to eight days until the closely watched special election in already-redrawn PA-18. President Donald Trump's reelection campaign on Friday announced it would hold a campaign rally within the district — in Moon Township — this coming Saturday.

In other PA-18 news:

— **"Sharp exchanges mark Saccone-Lamb debate," by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's Chris Potter:** "Rick Saccone and Conor Lamb agreed that Pennsylvania steelworkers need protection from foreign imports. But that was about as far as the consensus between the two congressional candidates extended during a Saturday night debate on WTAE-TV. ... [B]oth men spoke approvingly of President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum." [Full story](#)

— **"VoteVets jumps into PA-18 with TV ad," by Elena:** "VoteVets Action Fund is launching a \$350,000 TV ad buy in the final week of the special congressional election in Western Pennsylvania, attacking Republican Rick Saccone and urging voters to "send in the Marine" by supporting Democrat Conor Lamb." [Full story](#). Watch the ad.

— **"Lamb drops 60-second, positive ad in PA-18," by Elena:** "Democrat Conor Lamb is out with his latest TV ad, in which the former Marine emphasizes his support for public servants who don't always get as much attention as a military veteran." [Full story](#), [Watch the ad](#).

— **End Citizens United** has now raised \$200,000 for Lamb, the group announced. The average donation raised by ECU is \$8.04.

Upcoming election dates — Texas primaries: March 6. **Pennsylvania 18th District special election:** March 13. **Illinois primaries:** March 20.

Thanks for joining us! You can email tips to the Campaign Pro team at sbland@politico.com, eschneider@politico.com, krobillard@politico.com, dstrauss@politico.com and mseverns@politico.com.

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@politicoscott](#), [@ec_schmeider](#), [@politicokevin](#), [@danielstrauss4](#) and [@maggieeverns](#).

Campaign Pro Race Dashboard, POLITICO Pro's campaign tracking solution, is revamped and ready for 2018. Dive into campaigns with biographical candidate pages and a dedicated race dashboard for each House, Senate and gubernatorial contest. You also get access to FEC campaign finance data for federal elections. [Get started](#).

FIRST IN SCORE — NRSC dings "high-five Heidi" in digital ad: The NRSC is following up with a radio ad attacking Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp for, the committee says, engaging in a "high five" with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer after voting against an abortion ban bill in the Senate. The new Facebook ad is running statewide in North Dakota. See the ad [here](#).

ON THE AIR — Bredesen airs first ad in Tennessee Senate race: Former Gov. Phil Bredesen is up with his first television ad in Tennessee's Senate contest. The 30-second spot features Bredesen speaking direct to camera about his achievements as governor and promising to bring bipartisanship to the Senate. Advertising Analytics says the buy is backed by a statewide buy of more than \$250,000. Watch the ad [here](#).

ONE OUT, ONE IN — Rep. David Valadao (R-Calif.) lost his only Democratic challenger this weekend when attorney Emilio Huerta, the son of civil rights pioneer Dolores Huerta, bailed on the race. [The Fresno Bee](#) reported the younger Huerta submitted an op-ed to the paper in which he said he wouldn't run and planned instead to work to elect Democrats to other offices.

— According to the Los Angeles Times' Sarah D. Wire, engineer T.J. Cox, who had been running in Rep. Jeff Denham's district, is expected to switch to CA-21 and challenge Valadao.

— Valadao continues to thrive — he won by 13 points last cycle, even as Hillary Clinton carried his Central Valley district by 16 points. The filing deadline is this Friday. How hard will Democrats try to land a top recruit here?

THIS COMPARISON IS F-ING GOLDEN — "Indictment doesn't prove Greitens' guilt, but does it make him a 'governor who cannot govern,'" by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch's Kevin McDermott: "The state's budget was in trouble and its governor was facing a criminal trial. Those two realities alone, one newspaper argued, meant it was time for drastic action. ... 'He is, more than before, the governor who cannot govern,' declared the paper. 'Governor, resign.' The newspaper was the Chicago Tribune; the governor was Rod Blagojevich of Illinois." [Full story](#).

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TRUMP WATCH — "Trump to launch major donor initiative after disastrous week," by POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt: "The fundraiser, one of several big donor events Trump [hosted his past weekend] at Mar-a-Lago, shows how Trump is slowly building a 2020 campaign apparatus even as he endures the most tumultuous stretch of his presidency. While top advisers bolt the White House and a special counsel zeroes in on the president's ties to Russia, Trump is tapping a new campaign manager, taking steps to fend off would-be primary challengers, and lining up travel to critical 2020 states." [Full story](#).

AROUND THE MAP — Quick takes from across the country:

SENATE

Mississippi: GOP Sen. [Roger Wicker](#) is renting billboards that display the Twitter post in which Trump endorsed him for reelection, the [Washington Examiner](#) reports.

Missouri: Senate Majority PAC launched a new TV ad late last week linking GOP state Attorney General Josh Hawley to the embattled Greitens. [Full story](#).

New Jersey: Attorney Michael Starr Hopkins said in a statement Friday that he would suspend his campaign after concluding he had been unable to raise enough money to mount a serious primary challenge to Sen. [Bob Menendez](#), POLITICO New Jersey reported.

New York: "With minimal fuss and scaled adulation," Republicans officially nominated Chele Chiavacci Farley on Friday as their candidate to challenge Sen. [Kirsten Gillibrand](#), POLITICO New York reported.

Texas: Stefano de Stefano, Sen. [Ted Cruz](#)'s GOP primary challenger, says he recently received a phone call from the Cruz campaign in which the phone banker insisted Cruz has already won renomination, the [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#) reported.

HOUSE

IL-03/MA-07: The New York Times' Jonathan Martin and Alex Burns examined the stiff primary challenges facing Reps. [Dan Lipinski](#) (D-Ill.) and [Mike Capuano](#) (D-Mass.) this year.

MN-07: GOP businessman Scott Van Binsbergen, who declined to run against Democratic Rep. [Collin Peterson](#) in 2014, is considering a bid this year, [Roll Call](#) reported.

Old PA-15/New PA-07: GOP state Rep. Ryan Mackenzie announced Friday he is ending his campaign, the Allentown [Morning Call](#) reported.

Old PA-17/New PA-08: Republican Joe Peters said he would challenge Democratic Rep. [Matt Cartwright](#), ending his campaign for the open seat being vacated by Rep. [Lou Barletta](#) (R-Pa.), the Scranton [Times-Tribune](#) reported.

VA-02: The Norfolk Virginian-Pilot profiled GOP Rep. Scott Taylor as he faces a reelection challenge.

More VA-02: EMILY's List endorsed Navy veteran Elaine Luria.

GOVERNOR

Georgia: PowerPAC Georgia, a political action committee, plans to spend \$2.5 million to boost former state House Democratic Leader Stacey Abrams. [Full story](#).

New York: Dutchess County executive Marc Molinaro told Republicans in Saratoga Springs he would join the GOP primary race to challenge Gov. Andrew Cuomo, POLITICO New York reported.

More New York: The state's primary was set for Sept. 13, after Cuomo signed into a law a bill the state legislature passed last month, POLITICO Pro New York reported.

MAYORS

Washington: The Washington Post's Paul Schwartzman wonders, with scandals surrounding Mayor Muriel Bowser's administration, why Bowser "faces no formidable opposition" less than three weeks before the filing deadline "and will probably become the District's first mayor to win a second term since Anthony Williams in 2002."

CODA — QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Yes, Blumenthal Research Daily is a fake pollster. The numbers used were random and I did little to no research before piecing together a rather sloppy google doc." — Some jerk on the internet who fabricated a PA-18 poll on Friday. Thanks to [@gelliottmorris](#) for calling this out.

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/newsletters/campaign-pros-morning-score/2018/03/texas-primary-tests-deccs-strategy-122783>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Democrats face first test of primary muscle in Texas race [Back](#)

By Elena Schneider | 03/05/2018 05:01 AM EDT

HOUSTON — The opening primaries of the 2018 midterm elections on Tuesday feature the first critical test of national Democrats' strategy for handling the crowded primaries that could threaten the party's chances of winning control of the House next year.

The DCCC doesn't want Laura Moser as the party's nominee for a House seat in Texas that the party sees as critical to its strategy to winning control of the chamber next year. So the committee called her a carpet-bagging opportunist who "begrudgingly moved" here to run for office in [a post on its website](#).

The DCCC has warned for months that it would wade into crowded primary fields — here and elsewhere — either to pick favorites or harm candidates it sees as weaker in the general election. But there are few signs here that the DCCC's punches have landed. Instead, Moser's fundraising has ticked up — she's collected more than \$130,000 since the DCCC post on Feb. 22 — and she's urging voters in [a digital ad](#) to "[reject] the system where Washington party bosses tell us who to choose."

And now some Democrats are anxious the national party's tactics may backfire, reopening wounds that exacerbate a divide between the insurgent and establishment wings of the party — and emboldening the very candidates the party seeks to stop.

Moser said in an interview that she "feels like the test case" for how the DCCC will intervene in primaries this year, and she's demonstrating how candidates can respond when they're attacked by their party in Washington.

"This is a warning shot," she said.

It's not clear whether Moser will emerge from the crowded Democratic field — there are four serious candidates competing for two spots in a May runoff — in the race to face longtime GOP Rep. [John Culberson](#). Suburban seats like Texas' 7th Congressional District are widely seen as crucial to the party's chances to recapture the chamber.

The seat has been held by Republicans since 1970, starting with George H.W. Bush. But in 2016, the largely well-heeled Houston suburbs turned against President Donald Trump, backing Hillary Clinton by just over 1 point.

Some Democrats worried that Moser — a journalist and activist who grew up in Houston, then moved home from Washington in the last year — was too weak a candidate for the red-tinted seat. The DCCC dug up opposition research hits against her, including a column in *Washingtonian* magazine in which she joked she'd "sooner have my teeth pulled out without anesthesia" than move to her grandparents' home in Paris, Texas.

"I knew I was not their favorite candidate from the beginning," Moser said in an interview, noting that Paris, Texas, and Houston are "very different" places. "[But] putting your thumb on the scale, which they've been doing from the very beginning, is different from setting a Democrat on fire in the town square."

For now, she's using her own party's attacks as fodder for fundraising and voter motivation. Addressing two dozen voters at a candidate meet-and-greet in a townhouse here last week, Moser urged them to bring a friend to the polls on Tuesday, joking, "I would usually ask for money, but the DCCC has set us up for a while," drawing a mixture of laughter and boos from the group.

Josh Medina, a 33-year-old voter at Moser's event, called the DCCC's move "appalling." He isn't sure whom he'll support on Tuesday.

"Do I vote for the person I think is going to win, or the person I really want in office?" Medina said. "I don't want to feel like I'm throwing my vote away."

But while the DCCC outlined its attacks on its website, none of Moser's opponents have parroted those critiques yet — nor have any paid communications, like TV or digital ads, popped up from an outside group to drive the message beyond the activist community.